

PEEPS AT MANY LANDS
THE
HOLY LAND

BY
JOHN FINNEMORE

WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

BY
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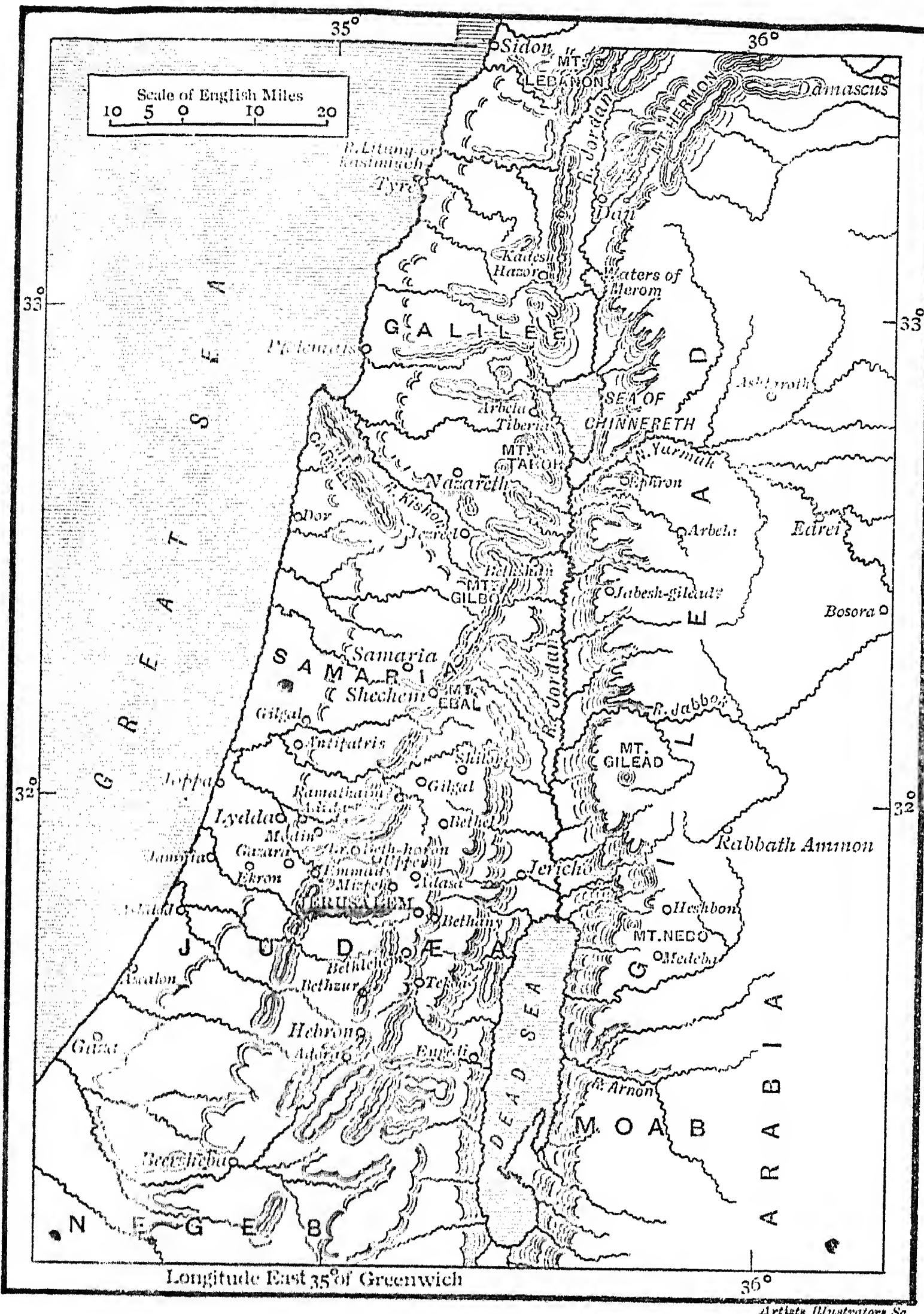
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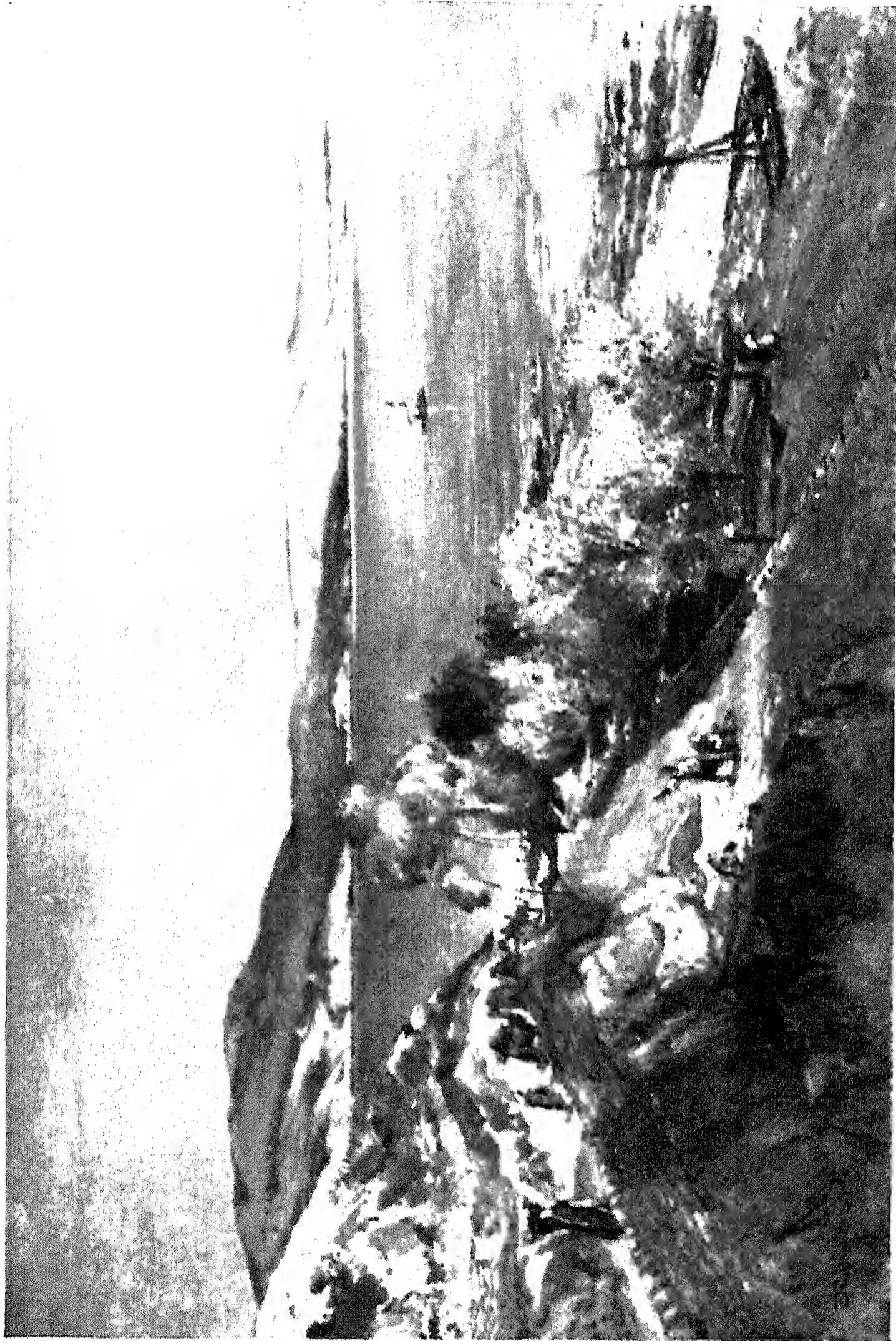
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THE HOLY LAND

CHAPTER I

THE HOLY LAND

THE little land of Palestine is the most interesting on earth to followers of the Christian faith, for it was here that Christ was born, here He lived, taught, and died, and for nearly 2,000 years Christian pilgrims have thronged to this small Eastern land to see the sacred places of their faith.

Palestine is about the size of Wales, and, like Wales, is a very mountainous country. It is full of hills and valleys, with here and there a rolling plain. The smallness of the country surprises every traveller. "In a stretch of country equal to that between Aberdeen and Dundee you cover the whole central ground of the Bible, from the Sea of Galilee to Jerusalem. In a ride equal to the distance from London to Windsor there may be seen enough to interpret many centuries of the world's supreme history. The Dead Sea is but 50 miles from the Mediterranean, the Sea of Galilee

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about 21 miles, while the distance in miles between the two seas is only 55. Yet in that little land there is every kind of soil, from mere sand and broken limestone to rich red and chocolate loam. It is a mountainous country throughout, and its inhabitants are a race of Highlanders."

Palestine has had many masters since the days of the ancient Canaanites. It is a land easily invaded, for it lies in a central position among nations, and its roads are, and always have been, great highways to and from Europe, Asia, and Africa. Thus for thousands of years there has been a constant flow of manifold human life through the land, and each wave of invasion, whether of soldier or of peaceful trader, has left its mark upon the soil and upon the people.

The most famous of all these invasions is recorded in the Old Testament, when the Hebrews marched into the land "flowing with milk and honey," and made the Canaanites their serfs and servants. Yet of all the invaders the Hebrews have left the smallest record in buildings and inscriptions.

There are the great stones which the Jews cut to build the Temple of Solomon, and these are almost the only remains which can be clearly ascribed to Jewish hands. Nor do the Jews who live in Palestine to-day descend from those Hebrews who fought for the Temple, and were butchered in thousands by the Roman soldiery. The Jew of to-day is for the most part an immigrant. He has returned to the land of

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his fathers from exile, and often forms part of some colony fostered by the wealth of some Jewish millionaire.

After the Jews came the Romans as masters of the land, and it is very likely that the scarcity of Jewish monuments is owing to the eagerness with which Rome tore down Hebrew buildings and set up her own imperishable work. In Palestine may be seen some of the most solid work of the greatest builders whom the world ever knew: mighty aqueducts and roads like rock, walls and bridges, baths and temples and amphitheatres—the land is dotted with Roman remains.

Under the Romans the Jews suffered the most bitter persecution. They were harried from their land with fire and sword until persecution ceased under Constantine early in the fourth century, and the Christian faith became the religion of the land, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was consecrated at Jerusalem.

Exactly 300 years later, in 637, Jerusalem fell into the hands of Arab conquerors, and shortly afterwards the Mohammedan era began.

But at first the Arabs were not unfriendly to Christians. For 400 years Christian pilgrims, monks, and priests were very little disturbed by the Moslem power. Then, in the eleventh century, the Arab rulers were replaced by the chiefs of wandering Turkish tribes, the Saracens of romance, and a time of tyranny and oppression began. Christian monks and pilgrims were slain, tortured, and imprisoned, and the

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cry of their sufferings reached the West, and the Crusades began. Army after army of these soldiers of the Cross sailed to Palestine, and its sands were drenched in blood. But in the end the Moslem power was not broken, and to-day the Holy Land is still under Moslem rule, and is in the hands of the Sultan of Turkey.

All this strife and stress of war and the myriad busy movements of trade have combined to fill the land with a curious mixture of races and tongues. In one day's ride the traveller may meet Arabs, Turks, Syrians, Circassians, Kurds, Greeks, Cypriotes, Egyptians, Nubians, Russians, Germans, English, French, Austrians, and Americans. "In the villages south of Damascus the crowd which gathers round the tents is sure to contain several smiling negroes, some of them branded on the cheeks; Circassians, with sickle-shaped nose and thin lips, sharp-featured and small-limbed men, with an untamable expression on their bitter faces; Arabs, darker of complexion and more languid of eye; and Turkish soldiers, thin and small-pox bitten. Here are to be found the Jew, sneering complacently at the inferior world; the fanatical Moslem, who will break the water-bottle your lips have touched; the Druse, who objects to coffee and tobacco, and to whom you hesitate to say 'Good-morning' lest he may have scruples about that; and the cross-bred ruffian, who has no scruples about anything."

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But to what race do the mass of the dwellers in Palestine belong—the Syrian peasantry? Well, learned men believe that here we find the ancient inhabitants of the soil, that Hebrew and Greek, Roman and Arab conquerors have dominated the country, and yet through all these invasions the old stock of the Canaanites has clung to the soil, and still clings. The Syrian peasant of to-day may be Moslem or Christian—there are many of either faith—but he is neither Jew, nor Roman, nor Greek, nor Arab. Above all, he is not a Jew. He hates the Jewish race bitterly, and the vilest term of contempt in the mouth of an angry peasant is to call his opponent a Jew.

They have a very bad time of it, these unlucky Syrian peasants, for they are ground under the heel of their masters, the Turks. The Turk is the worst governor in the world. He has only one idea, and that is to fill his own pockets. A Turkish governor may see very clearly that by his policy of laying heavy taxes on a poor country he is bringing it to utter ruin, that in a short time there will be no taxes for anybody to gather, but for all that he seizes everything he can lay hands on at the moment, careless of the future. But even worse than the weight of the taxes is the method of their collection.

A band of mounted troops rides into a village, very often without warning. They have come for the taxes, and there they will stay until the amount is handed over. In the case of a poor village, the money

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is not quickly collected, and while waiting for it the soldiers live at the expense of the villagers, and they take care to be supplied with the best that is in the place.

Let us now take a look at a peasant home and see how these people live—the people who have tilled the soil and watched the flocks of the Holy Land for so many ages.

CHAPTER II

IN A PEASANT HOME—I

THE house of a peasant in the Holy Land is a very simple affair. As a rule it consists of one large room, part of which is occupied by the family, and part by the animals which they own. The materials of which the house is built depend upon the neighbourhood. In the hills there is plenty of stone, and in the plains there is plenty of earth; so in the one case the walls are of stone, in the other of mud.

The peasant of the plains can also obtain timber as well as earth, so that when he has raised his low red walls, he lays long beams across from wall to wall and forms a flat roof. Upon the beams earth is again spread thickly and trodden hard. In the springtime a crop of rich grass will rise upon these earthen roofs, and the goats soon find their way up, and pasture at ease on the house-top.

The peasant of the hills finds building a much more

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difficult affair. Stone is heavier and slower to build with than mud, and he has to make his walls very stout and strong on account of his roof. On the bare and sterile mountains he would search for timber in vain, and for the roof he must use the stone which lies to his hand in such abundance. So when the four walls are built, the structure is finished with a dome-shaped roof of stone. Such a roof throws great strain on the walls, and the latter are made 3 or 4 feet thick to withstand the pressure.

It is best to build such a roof quickly, in order that the stones may lock together and set firmly in a short time. So that when the builder has formed a framework on which the dome is to be laid, all his friends come to his aid, carrying up stones and mortar to the masons, who lay the dome with great speed. In this way a large roof is often built in a few hours. After about a week the framework is removed, and it is found that the dome has settled into its place with its stones bound together in the most solid fashion.

The day when a roof is built always closes with a great merry-making. This is the return which the owner makes for the help of his neighbours: in the evening he provides them with a feast, and this break in the monotony of village life is greatly enjoyed. The feasters laugh, sing, shout, and clap their hands, and the village is filled with the merriest uproar.

The raising of the dome does not complete the house, for the finished roof, like that of all Eastern houses, is

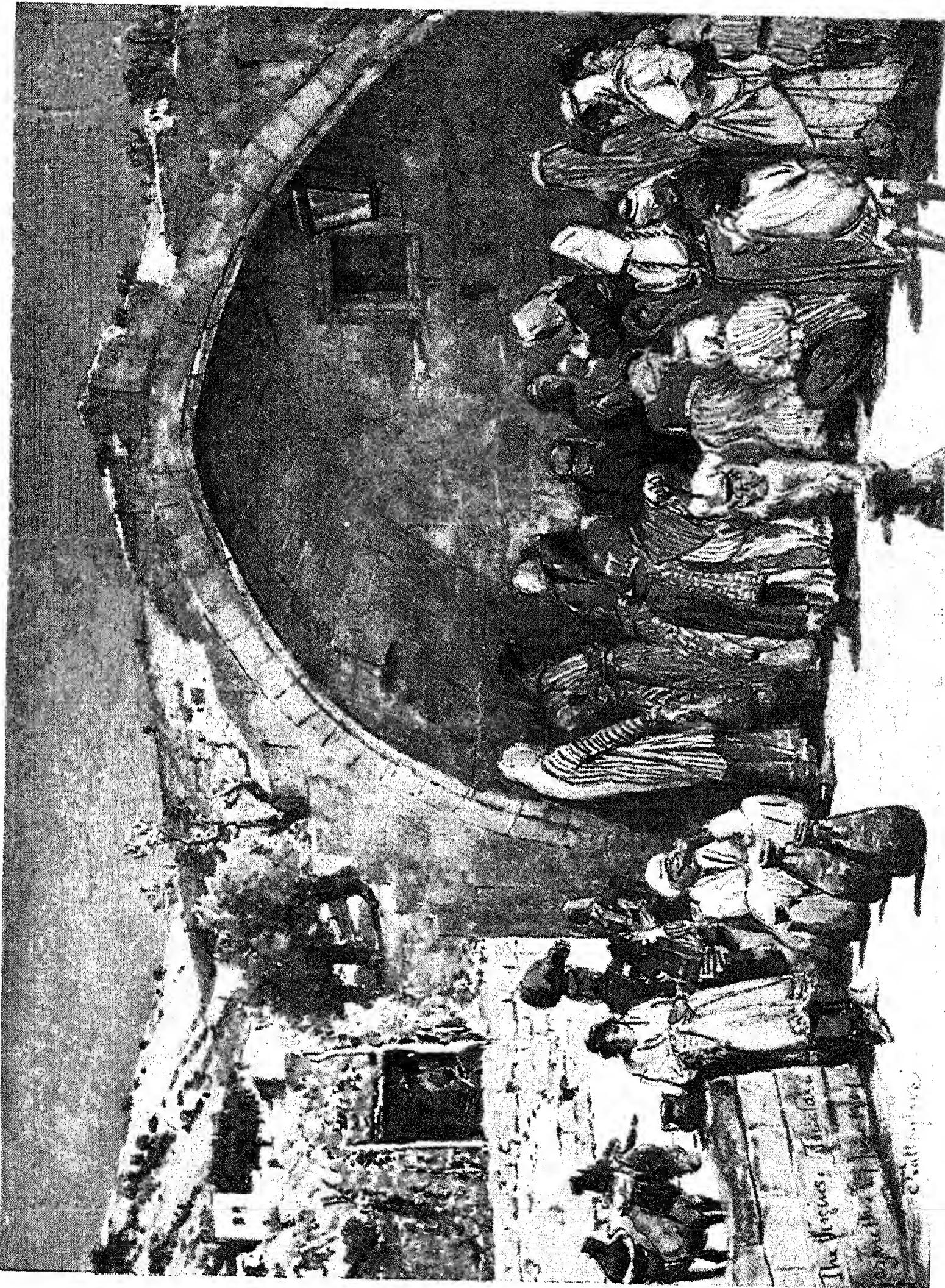
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always flat. The walls are again carried up above the dome, and the latter is covered with earth and rubble trodden or beaten hard, and the whole made flush with the walls, giving the usual flat roof.

The inside of this peasant home, then, consists of one large room, but of this room about three-quarters of the space is raised and reached by one or more steps. This portion is called the mustabeh, and here the family live, while in the lower portion are stabled the horse, the cow, the donkey, and the goats.

At one side of the mustabeh is a hearth, and sometimes there is a chimney, but not always, and then the smoke has to find its way out at the door. There may be a small opening or window high up in the wall to form another vent, but this is not always found. In the more unsafe parts of the country such a window would afford opportunity for an enemy to fire into the room, so the only opening is the doorway, which can be strongly barricaded by a door formed of heavy planks.

The furnishing of the mustabeh is a very easy business, for, in our sense of the word, there is no furnishing at all. The peasant's home does not contain a single chair, table, bench, or bedstead ; it contains some jars, some pots and pans, some cooking utensils, some bins for storing supplies, and that is all, save the bedding and a few mats. The mats are made of grass or rushes, and are spread upon the floor for the people to sit on ; of the bedding there is no sign by day. But when night comes the housewife goes to a recess formed



THE FOUNTAIN OF THE VIRGIN AT NAZARETH. Page 76.

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in the wall, and drags out a mattress 3 or 4 inches thick, filled with wool or rags. She lays this on the floor, and then fetches from the same recess two or three thick wadded quilts and some pillows stuffed with straw. This is the whole provision for sleeping, and it is rolled up and put away again in the morning.

In a row at one end of the mustabeh are the bins, made of clay, in which the peasant stores his supplies of wheat, dried figs, lentils, and other products of his land. The bins are large, for they are meant to hold the harvest of the year, and they are made by the women. When the women need a new bin, they seek some bed of tough clay and dig up a quantity. The clay is thoroughly broken up and soaked with water, and then crushed straw is well worked into it with the hands. The clay and straw form a very tenacious mass, and with this material the corn-bin is built.

Only a small portion is built up each day, the new part being allowed to set firmly on the old before more is added. If the work went on too fast, the upper part would become too heavy for the soft lower part and would break away. We see exactly the same method followed by the swallow, who builds her nest of mud against our eaves, and lets one layer become hard and firm before she adds the next.

When the bin is finished it is left in the powerful Syrian sun to bake hard, and is then carried into the house. Near the bottom of the bin a small hole is left, from which the contents are drawn as needed. In some

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parts of the Holy Land very large bins are built in the house itself. A framework of posts and reeds is set up, and this framework is then plastered with mud or clay. Such a bin will hold a great amount of grain, and it is thought that these bins were the "barns" spoken of in the Bible, for the barn, as we see it in England, is not known in the Holy Land.

After the bins the most important articles are the jars in which water, oil, and honey are stored. The oil is pressed from the olive, and is used largely in cooking food. Then come the wooden bowls in which bread is mixed and meals are served, wicker baskets in which all kinds of things are carried, and, finally, the mill in which corn is ground.

The mill ought, perhaps, to have come first, not last, for it is the one thing which cannot be spared out of the house. Without it bread could not be made, and people would starve, and its importance is recognized in the Old Testament law, which forbade a creditor to take a millstone in pledge.

CHAPTER III

IN A PEASANT HOME—II

SOMETIMES on the roof of the house a little upper room is built. In the great heat of summer the family sleep in it, for it is cooler than the room below. Occasionally it has no roof, only four walls and a trellis of boughs

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overhead, on which a vine is trained. These rooms are usually reached from the ground by a staircase outside the house. Such a chamber as this was that made by the Shunamite woman for Elisha, "a little chamber on the wall," and the outer staircase allowed him to come and go privately.

The roof-top sees almost as much of the people of the house as the mustabeh itself. The flat roof serves as a storehouse, where many things are piled out of reach of light-fingered neighbours. There are stacked the faggots of brushwood which the women and girls have dragged home with much labour ; there grain is spread out to dry, and olives to ripen ; there the family sit in the cool of the evening when the day's work is done, the father smoking his long pipe, and the children running from side to side, to see what is going on in the narrow lanes of the village.

If there is no good well in the neighbourhood each house is provided with its cistern, in which rain-water is collected and stored. A cistern is formed by digging a large hole in the ground and building a strong wall round the foot of the hole. On the wall a dome-shaped roof is erected, with a hole left in the top. This hole is to admit water, and it is large enough for a man's body to pass through, thus enabling the owner to descend from time to time to clean out the cistern. The earth is filled in over the dome, so that all looks as level as before the hole was dug. The inside of the cistern is lined thickly with mortar and finished with a coating

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of a special kind of plaster, which sets extremely hard, and becomes in time perfectly water-tight.

The cistern and its contents form a very precious possession in this land of intense heat and drought. If a long time passes without rain, and the water in the cisterns falls low, there comes a period of great scarcity. Those whose water has run out creep by night to steal from the cisterns that still hold a little, and the owners of the latter have to watch their store. One method of guarding against these water-thieves is for the owner to spread his bed on the stone which closes the mouth of the well and sleep there: then he knows that his precious water is safe.

If a village is so lucky as to possess a good spring of water, the women may be seen going at morning and evening with their water-jars or their water-skins to bring home the amount required. If they carry water-jars, these are balanced on their heads both going and returning; if water-skins, the latter are slung on their backs by a strap passing over the forehead.

In the morning, when water has been fetched, the village begins to resound with the hum of the handmills grinding the corn into flour, and this hum has never been silent for ages. Thousands of years ago the Syrian peasant woman ground her corn just as it is ground to-day. The Bible has many references to this grinding of the flour for the daily bread, and it is the handmill which is spoken of every time.

The mill is formed of two flat round stones, about

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18 inches across, the upper and the nether millstones. In the lower stone an iron pin is fixed in the centre, and the upper stone has a hole drilled through it, so that it may be slipped on this pin. Near the edge of the upper stone is fixed a wooden handle by which it may be turned round.

The woman working the mill takes a handful of corn and drops it into the hole in the centre of the upper stone. She turns the upper stone swiftly, and the corn works its way between the two stones and out at the edges, being ground to flour in its passage. A vessel may be placed to receive it, or a cloth spread on the floor to catch it. In the latter case the flour collects in a ring round the nether millstone.

The work is very hard, and by no means quickly done. A woman who has no one to help her must spend hours every day to grind enough meal to feed her family, and the hum of the millstones in one house or another is incessant. Very often a second woman lends a hand, and the two women sit on their heels on opposite sides of the mill, and both grasp the same handle. It is to two women sitting at this task that the famous reference of the New Testament is made: "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

When the flour is ground it is mixed with salt and water into a stiff dough, and is leavened by working into it a piece of fermented dough saved from the last batch of bread. When the dough is ready for baking

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it is formed into large flat cakes, and never into loaves such as we use. This is because in the East bread is always broken by the hand, and never cut with a knife. Among Moslems it is a crime to cut bread with a knife, for they look upon bread as the supreme gift of Allah, and regard it as a thing to be kept sacred from the stroke of steel.

The cakes are baked in various ways. One simple method is to build a fire of twigs in a large earthenware jar, and when the jar is very hot thin cakes of dough are spread around the sides. A larger oven is constructed as follows: Upon a flat pavement of stone a great shallow bowl of clay is placed upside down. In the centre of the bowl there is a hole through which the woman attending to the bread can thrust her hand and arm. She builds a fire over this big bowl-shaped vessel, until both the vessel and the pavement which it covers are hot enough to receive the dough. Then the cakes are slipped through the hole in the vessel and laid on the pavement. The hole is closed with a cover, and fresh fuel is heaped over the oven to maintain the heat until the bread is baked.

At the time of a feast, or in a wealthy household, many dainties are baked in these simple ovens. "There are crisp network discs covered with sesame seed, paste buns filled with pounded nuts, and folded in triangular shape; threads of vermicelli are twisted together to the thickness of a rope, steeped in a sauce of honey and nuts, and arranged in a flat coil, to make a large cake

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on a flat tray ; thin wafers are coated with grape syrup, and powdered with pungent or fragrant seeds and leaf dust ; common loaves, before being sent to the oven, sometimes have the surface rubbed with oil and covered with aromatic seeds, and cakes are occasionally soaked or fried in boiling oil." But these dainties are very rarely seen or heard of in a peasant home. If the fellah and his family can get enough of wheaten bread to satisfy their hunger, they are perfectly content.

CHAPTER IV

IN A PEASANT HOME—III

THE day in a peasant home begins with the family rising from the mattress where they have slept, and going at once about their work. What of breakfast ? Most of them do not take any. There is, in fact, only one regular meal in the peasant day — the supper at evening. If hunger be felt at other times, there is no sitting down to a prepared meal. The hungry person seizes a handful of dates or figs, a bunch of grapes, a piece of bread, the first provision which comes to hand, and eats it as he goes about his task.

One writer remarks: "I was riding out one afternoon to a village several hours' journey from Jerusalem, and about half-way overtook a peasant. After a little conversation he asked me if I had any bread with me, as he had walked into the city that

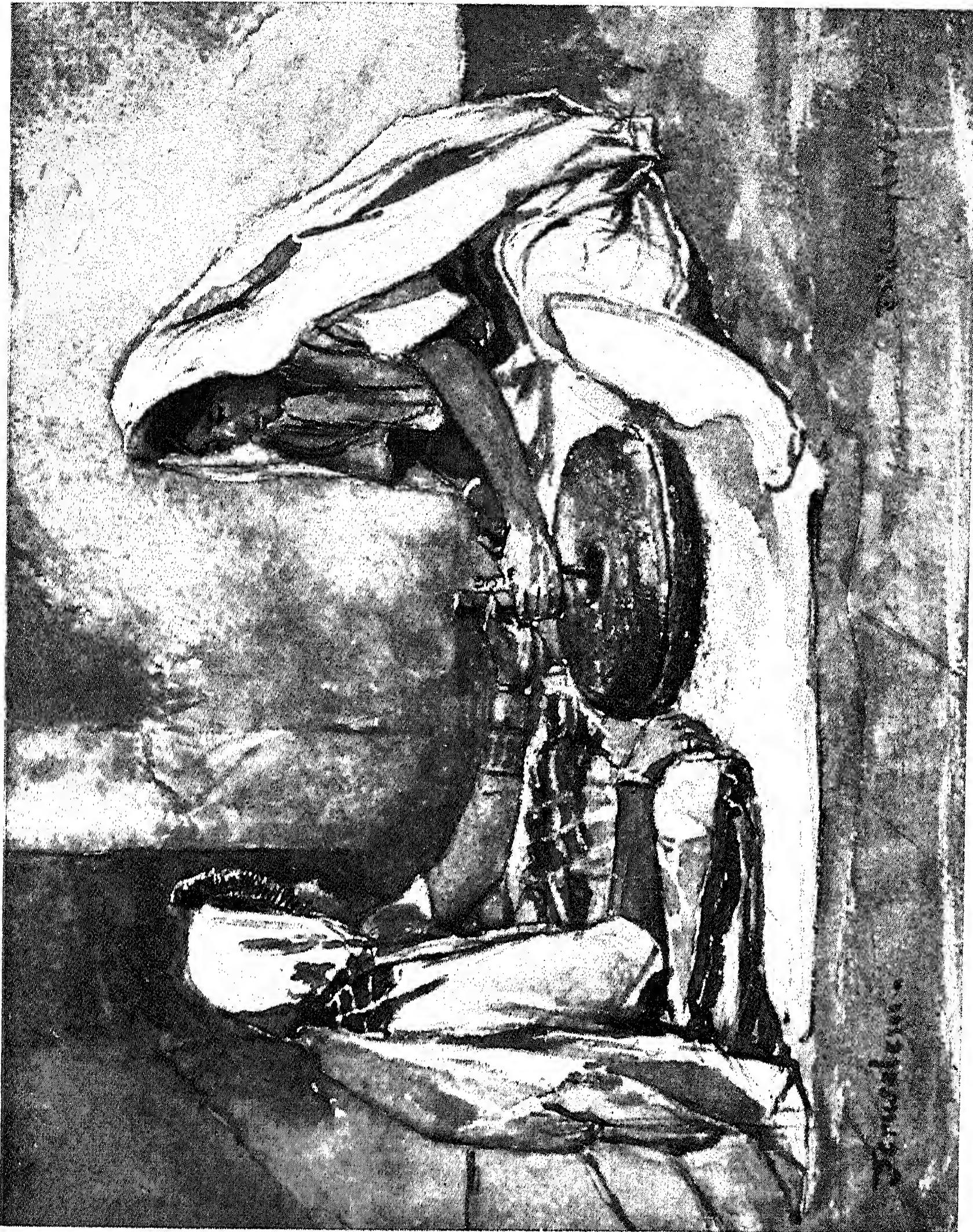
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morning from a place some twenty-five miles distant, had transacted his business there, and had now got about half-way back, no food having passed his lips since his supper the previous evening."

The father sets off to his work in the fields, and the mother becomes busy about the house. When she puts the baby down safely out of the way, she may put it in a cradle, but she is much more likely to lay it in a manger. All round the mustabeh, the upper floor occupied by the family, runs a trough hollowed out in its surface of dried mud. This is the manger from which the animals stabled in the lower part of the room eat their food, and here the baby is often placed, so that to this day in Palestine you may see "a babe lying in a manger."

The babe itself looks like a tiny living mummy, for it is wrapped in its swaddling-clothes, bound round and round from neck to foot with a long, broad strip of calico, so that body, arms, and legs are held perfectly straight and rigid. This wrapping is worn until the child is about three months old if it be strong and healthy, but a weak child is swaddled for a much longer period.

If there are older children in the house, the washing and dressing of them is a very short affair. In the first place, they don't get washed at all, and in the second, their only garment is a sort of little cotton sack with three holes in it. Through the middle hole the head is pushed, the arms slip out at the other holes,



TWO WOMEN GRINDING AT THE MILL. Page 13.

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and the child is dressed save for a little cap which he claps on, and is then ready to run out to play in the sand or the mud.

The playtime period in the life of peasant children is a very short one. They soon have to make themselves useful about the house or with the animals, and the little girls are set to work even earlier than the boys.

Some of the children help to herd the sheep and goats, some are set to work to collect fuel. The latter may be sticks and dried shrubs, it may be stalks of grain from which the ear has been gathered, but if there be nothing in the way of wood or straw to be found, it will be dried dung.

In many parts of Palestine dried dung is the only fuel used by the peasants. It is a very ancient custom to gather the dung of goats and cows and store it for firing. It is not an unpleasant fuel to handle, as a stranger might think. Under the burning Syrian sun a heap of dung becomes as dry and free from odour as a heap of straw. In many villages the dunghill is by far the biggest thing about the place. It overtops the houses by a long way, and the villagers mount to its summit to look out across the plain, or sit there at sunset to enjoy the evening breeze.

If the housewife has some clothes to wash, she and her daughters carry them to some stream or pool, and there they rub the clothes with wood ashes or clay in place of soap, and then beat the well-soaked garments

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with a heavy piece of wood, and so, between beating and rubbing, drive the dirt out. They take no heed as to where this washing is performed. It may be the only water-supply of themselves or their neighbours, but they do not hesitate to defile it. The peasantry are incredibly careless as to the condition of the water which they drink. If the liquid be almost solid with filth, a woman will pour the water through her veil, and thus filter a little of the heavier impurity, but to the insanitary state of the fluid she carries home she gives never a thought.

A short time ago there was an outbreak of cholera in a town of Palestine, and a young man from a neighbouring village died of the disease. His mother went to the city and carried home the clothes of her dead son. These clothes she washed in the spring which supplied the village with water, and a terrible outbreak of cholera soon showed itself among the villagers. But so great is the ignorance of the peasantry that medical missionaries have the greatest difficulty in persuading them that their own ways are at fault, and that their own habits are at the bottom of the diseases from which they suffer.

When the washing is finished, there is butter to be made in a native churn. The churn is a goatskin about two-thirds filled with milk. The skin is swung from a tripod of three sticks, just as gipsies hang a pot on a fire. Then two women push the skin to and fro between them, splashing the milk about in the skin

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until the butter separates. If there is only one woman at the work, she rocks the bag about on her knees. Very little of this butter is used fresh. It is mostly heated over the fire until it becomes clarified, and then it is stored in jars or skins, and used in cookery—for frying vegetables, meat, or eggs, or for mixing with boiled rice. When properly and carefully prepared and stored, this clarified butter will keep good for years.

As evening draws near the housewife begins to make preparation for *the* meal of the day, the supper, to which all will gather when the sun has fallen and the work of the day is over. She goes to her bins and takes out rice and washes it, and boils it in a metal vessel. In another vessel some vegetables are cooked, and, if the family are well off, a piece of meat is added to the vegetables. Everyone, however poor, tries to find something with which to make a hot dish at the evening meal, even if it be only a handful of boiled lentils to moisten and make savoury the dry bread.

The cooking takes place outside the house in fine weather. A fire of sticks is lighted between two stones, and the cooking-pot stands on the stones. In wet weather the fire is made in the house, but in this case charcoal is used, as this gives off little or no smoke.

When the meal is ready, the main dish is served in a great bowl, which is set in the middle of the floor, and round the bowl are ranged cakes of bread. The members of the family wash their hands, and then squat

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on their heels round the big bowl and begin their meal. As each person dips his hand into the bowl—there are neither forks nor spoons—he utters a pious form of words for grace, and then proceeds to whip the grains of wheat or rice into his mouth with his fingers. He does this in so dexterous a fashion that often not a grain will be dropped in the course of a meal. Only the right hand is used, and the liquid of the dish is taken up by soaking pieces of bread in it.

When the solid part of the meal is despatched, it is washed down with large draughts of water, and the hands are washed again to cleanse them from the stains of food. Now pipes are lit, and coffee, served without sugar, is handed round. Both men and women smoke, and the favourite pipe of the men is one whose bowl is formed of red clay, and whose stem is of wood and as long as his arm. The women more often smoke a nargileh, or hubble-bubble, the large water-pipe with a long flexible stem.

CHAPTER V

THE PEASANT'S YEAR IN THE HOLY LAND—I

THE long rainless summer of Palestine is often a time of great loss and suffering to the Syrian farmer. Perchance the well or cistern upon which he depends to water his flock runs dry, and then he must drive them far afield to discover some water-hole where his thirsty

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animals may drink. If he finds none, they fall and die, and many a hill-side track is white with the bones of poor creatures who have perished of thirst.

As a rule, between May and October there are five or six months without rain. The summer may begin with brooks and rivers brimming with water, with fields and pastures green, with groves and gardens full of verdure. But day after day passes without a single cloud to break the force of the scorching beams of the powerful sun. The brooks fail and the rivers dry up till their beds are white in the glare of the burning day. The grass dies from meadow and hill-side till the bare brown earth lies naked in the quivering heat ; the trees shed their leaves until, in many places, there is no sign of green save on the branches of the evergreen olive.

In the villages the water in the wells and the cisterns is guarded as the most precious treasure, for it means life, and its use is restricted to the barest needs of drinking and cooking. Wells at a distance have to be carefully protected from wild animals, for the shyest creatures, made bold by the tortures of thirst, will venture anything to obtain water, and a great stone is rolled over the mouth of the well to keep them from drinking and polluting the priceless contents. At times the great heat is rendered still more intense, more suffocating, by the dreaded sirocco, the wind which blows from the east, often called "simoom" ("the poisonous").

This scorching blast sweeps across the Great Syrian Desert, and is intensely dry. It often comes at the

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end of summer, and burns the life out of the little herbage which the drought has left. It is laden with fine dust gathered from the desert sands, and while it blows, both man and beast feel the most wretched languor, and are in the greatest discomfort of mind and body. The atmosphere becomes thick and gloomy, and all cower in shelter and wait for the hated wind to blow over, which it does in about a week, though at times it may last longer.

We cannot wonder, then, that as the summer draws to a close every heart is filled with an intense desire for rain, and that the thought of the cool, heavy drops pouring over the thirsty land is the sweetest that the mind can dwell upon.

At last there comes an October day when the peasant sees the sunset sky all dark with gathering cloud. His heart rejoices, for he knows that the cloudy west means rain, and perhaps that very night there is a slight shower, an earnest and foretaste of what is soon to come.

Now he sets to work to make ready for the tremendous downpour, upon which all his hopes depend. First he attends to his roof, lest the rain should stream through into his house. The heat of summer has, perchance, seamed its flat earthen surface with many cracks. He spreads fresh earth, and runs his stone-roller to and fro until all is rolled hard and firm once more. Next he descends into his water-cistern, and cleans it out ready to receive the welcome store of water, and the

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channels which conduct the rain to it are cleaned out and put in order. In the plains, where the house-walls are of mud, great faggots are piled against the sides and corners exposed to the full force of the rain. This is to prevent the mud from being softened and washed away, to the great weakening of the wall.

A few days pass, during which the clouds gather more and more thickly, and lightning plays across the sky, and then the rain begins to fall in such torrents as we rarely see in England. The windows of heaven are opened, and a tremendous downpour soaks the parched soil and loosens its surface. The latter has been baked into a hardness upon which the feeble Syrian plough would make no impression, and without the rain there could be no seed-time in the Holy Land.

While the rain falls the peasant spends his time indoors, making ready for the busy season near at hand. He overhauls his plough, and shapes and refits any part that needs renewal, sees that the wooden yoke is in order, and perhaps cuts and points a new goad with which to urge forward his team.

The Syrian plough is a very simple affair, and consists of a long pole of wood, to which the oxen are attached by a yoke. To the end of the pole a curved piece of wood is fastened, and the lower end of the curve is fixed to the ploughshare, while a wooden handle rises from the angle of the curved piece, and is grasped by the ploughman.

The ploughshare is the only part made of iron, and

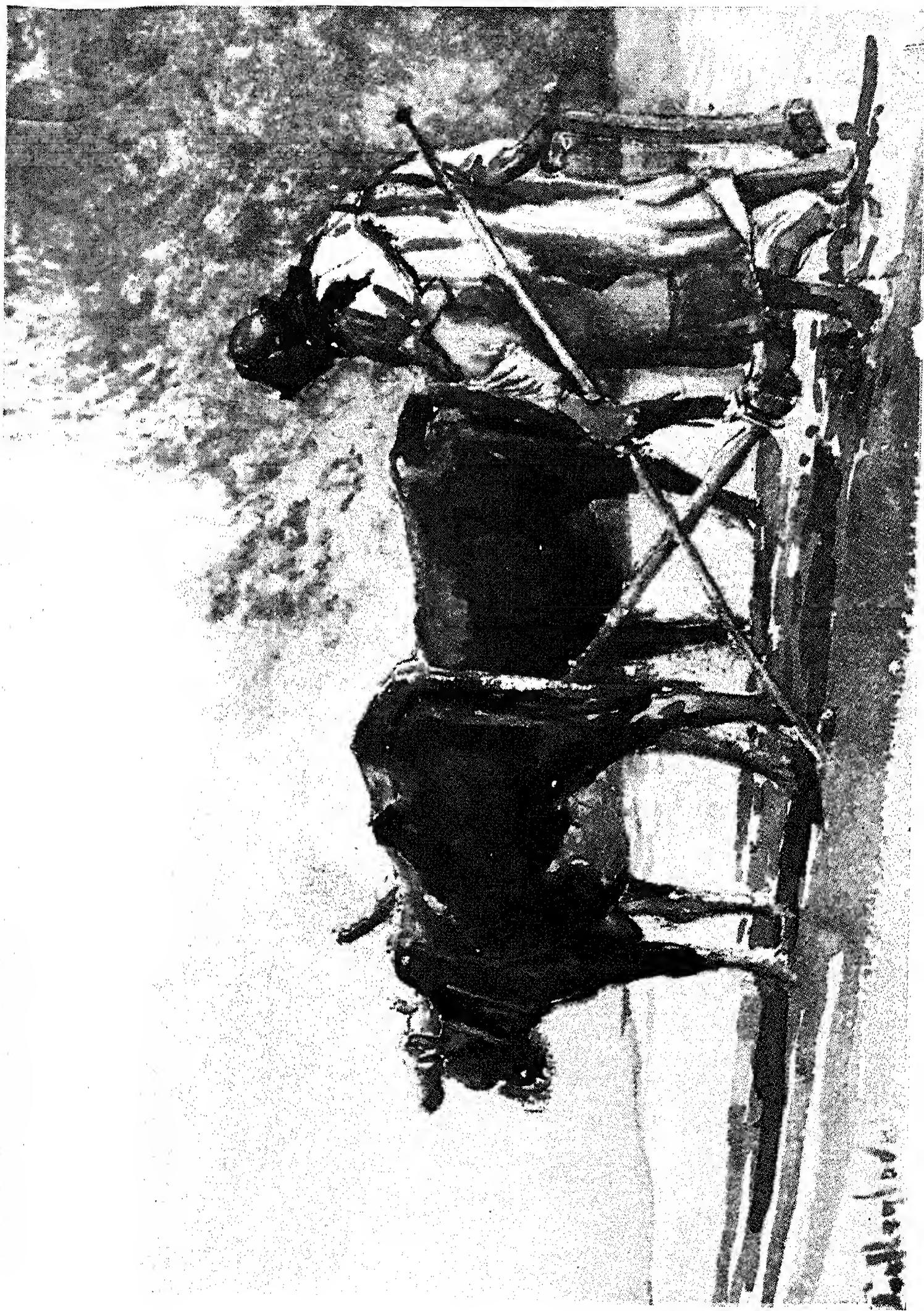
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is shaped like the fluke of an anchor, and is meant to drive into the ground just as an anchor drives into sand. Unlike our ploughs, which turn the land over, the Syrian plough only breaks the land up, being dragged through the soil a little below the surface.

We plough first and sow afterwards, but the Syrian peasant, as a rule, sows first and ploughs afterwards. When the welcome rain has softened the hard red soil, he goes forth and scatters his seed by hand over the surface of his field ; then he puts his pair of oxen into the yoke, fastens the yoke to the centre pole of the plough, and begins to turn up the land. As the plough-share is driven along, it breaks the upper layer of soil into small clods, and the seeds slip down between the clods and are covered by the loose soil.

Very often the plough-land of a village is one large open flat, in which every man has his place and share. Between one peasant's plot and the next a double furrow is drawn, and piles of stones are set up in the furrow as landmarks. The removal of these stones would lead at once to fierce quarrels as to rights of ownership, and hence the stern injunction of the Old Testament against the man who removes his neighbour's landmarks.

Upon such a village field twenty or thirty ploughs may be seen at work together, each man holding and guiding his plough with his right hand, while he drives his oxen with a goad—a long, pointed stick—which he wields with his left hand. If a man does not possess a pair of oxen, he may yoke an ox and an ass together,



PLOUGHING ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES,

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and then he arranges them so that the heavier work falls upon the ox, as the stronger animal. In some parts camels are used for ploughing, and it is very odd to see a tall camel pulling the small, low plough. Odder still is the sight occasionally seen of a camel and a donkey harnessed to the same plough, forming the queerest pair it is possible to imagine.

But all this activity depends upon the rain, and until the rain comes the plough lies idle. If the rains are delayed, the villagers become very anxious, and in some parts of the country a village procession is formed to beg for rain. At the head of the procession rides an old woman on a donkey. Her face is turned to the donkey's tail, and the women of the place march with her round the village, all of them singing and praying for rain. In other villages the procession will be formed by children only. The children provide themselves with drums or with old tins that may be beaten with a stick, and march round the village, making a tremendous noise and shouting in chorus: "O Lord, rain! O Lord, much rain! Water Thy thirsty crops!" None of the elder people takes part in this. It is thought that the prayers of innocent children are more likely to be heard than the supplications of their sinful elders.

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CHAPTER VI

THE PEASANT'S YEAR IN THE HOLY LAND—II

THE Bible speaks of “the former and the latter rains.” The former rains are the heavy downpours of autumn and early winter, when the land is ploughed and the seed is sown. The latter rains come in March and April, and usher in the hot weather after the winter has gone.

In using the word “winter,” we must take care not to picture a winter such as we know in our own land. It is true that much snow falls on the higher hills and lies deep for months on the Lebanon range, but the plains and lowlands know only the heavy rain, and the wheat and barley are growing all the time, and oranges and lemons ripen in December.

January sees the severest cold, the darkest days, and the heaviest rain. In February sunshine and showers are mixed, and the Arabs call it the “one-eyed month,” meaning that its face is bright on one side, dark on the other; but the crops grow fast, and with the greater sunshine of March they move on faster still until April, the loveliest month of the year in Palestine, is reached.

Now the rich soil, soaked deep with rain and warmed through by the hot sun, carpets itself with thick grass, studded with the most beautiful flowers—with scarlet poppies and crimson anemones, with blue dwarf corn-flowers and yellow marigolds, with white narcissus and

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the lovely iris flowers, which are said to be the "lilies of the field" of which Christ spoke.

Now the fruit-trees are decked with blossom, and show the tender green of young foliage. Now the flocks and herds may eat their fill and fatten themselves against the time of scarcity, which the heat of the sun, growing and still growing day by day, assures all is at hand. Now fall the latter rains, refreshing the crops, which are fast whitening unto harvest.

As a rule the latter rains are much lighter than the former rains, but in some years they are of tremendous force and volume, and in a few hours little brooks become raging torrents which no one can pass, and man and beast, in this land of few bridges, must wait beside them till they have fallen again.

The beauty of April is short-lived. The fierce sun of May puts a finishing touch to the ripening of the corn, but it kills the flowers, and the grass withers away. May sees the busiest time of the peasant's year. Out go old and young to the harvest-field ; not one remains at home. The parents reap the grain ; the older children load the animals with the sheaves, and drive them to the threshing-floor ; the baby is hung in a bag to a branch of a tree or a tripod of sticks.

There is no waiting for the corn to dry after cutting, for in that hot climate it is perfectly dry as it stands, so it is carried as soon as cut to the threshing-floor. The reaper seizes a handful of stalks, a little distance below the ear, with his left hand, and cuts the stalks through

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with a sickle near to the ground. In shallow soil the stalks are often pulled up bodily by the roots.

When the corn is cut, the threshing-floor becomes a busy place. It is an open level space formed on the rock, if rock is to be found, or, failing rock, of soil beaten very hard and flat. Upon the floor the sheaves are spread out in a circular heap, 30 feet across and 3 feet deep. To guard this precious heap of corn, the peasant brings his bed to the spot and sleeps there night by night till the work is over, lest loss should befall him by thieves or fire.

No farmer is allowed to thresh his corn until the whole crop of the village has been brought in. This rule is made in order that each man's share of the taxes may be duly apportioned, and until the amount each man has to pay has been settled, his harvest remains in an untouched mass on his threshing-floor.

When he has permission to thresh, the farmer employs a man to shoe his oxen with plates of iron, and then the cattle, with possibly donkeys mixed among them, are fastened together in a line by their headstalls.

Now they are driven round and round on the pile of corn, marching slowly and heavily over the heaped-up sheaves. When the line of tramping animals has moved in one way for a quarter of an hour, it is stopped. Next the oxen and asses are made to face about, and the animal that was outside is now placed inside, and the march is resumed in the opposite direction.

Then after another quarter of an hour the original

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order is restored, both in place and direction of march, and so it goes on as long as the animals are at work. Now and again the whole heap is turned over, and during this process the heavier grain slips to the foot of the pile as the untrodden sheaves are thrown to the surface.

Two days of this treading and turning suffice to beat the whole pile of sheaves into a mass of grain mingled with straw, the latter so broken by the feet of the animals as to resemble chaff. The next process is to separate the straw from the grain, and this winnowing is always performed by the aid of the wind.

When the breeze blows the peasant takes his fan, a wooden pitchfork, having five broad flat prongs, and tosses the mixture of grain and straw high into the air. The heavy grain falls at his feet, the straw is carried 3 or 4 yards away by the wind. The straw, again, is divided into the finer parts from the upper portion of the stalks, and the coarser, rougher parts from the roots, joints, and lower end of the stems. The former is used for fodder, and given the animals in place of hay, which is unknown in Palestine, and the latter serves as fuel.

There is a second method of threshing, often employed by those who have but few animals. Thick planks of wood are nailed together, until a threshing-board about 5 feet by 4 is formed. In the under part of the board pieces of flint are fixed, so that they project a little from the lower face. This board may be drawn by one or two animals, and it does the work

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rather more quickly than the treading, but by this method the straw is not quite so good for fodder.

In some parts of Syria a village will enjoy two harvests. It has land in the hills and also on the plains, and the harvest on the plains is ripe a month or six weeks before the crops on the hills. A cultivated hill-side in Palestine is a most interesting, and often a most beautiful, sight. The steep slope is laid out in terraces, each terrace formed by building a retaining wall across the slope.

The walls vary in height, from 1 foot to 7 or 8 feet, and the hollow inside the wall is filled up with earth until a level terrace is formed. Upon some hills there are seventy or eighty of these terraces one above the other, so that, standing on the summit, it seems as if you were at the head of a gigantic flight of stairs leading to the valley below. At times the terraces are planted only with corn, but the finest effect is gained where the land is planted with vines and fruit-trees.

The vines are planted near the outer edge of the terrace, where the soil is deepest, and the branches hang down over the wall and ripen their clusters in the sun. Fig-trees, mulberries, and olive-trees are planted behind the vines, and when each tree is covered with fresh foliage, the view from the valley below or an opposite slope is most entrancing. Row upon row the vines pour their great green leaves down the slope, and the darker olive and fig set off the rich freshness of the vine, and the red earth and the grey stone walls add

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new touches of colour, till the whole scene under the brilliant Syrian sunshine is one of magical beauty and charm.

CHAPTER VII

THE PEASANT'S YEAR IN THE HOLY LAND—III

IT is to the vine that the thoughts of the farmer turn when the grain harvest has been dealt with. As the heat of summer grows more and more intense, the vineyard calls for more and more attention. The water of a neighbouring brook is turned aside to irrigate the thirsty soil, and the huge clusters of white and red and purple grapes swell steadily in the hot sun.

A vineyard calls for harder and more regular labour than any other industry the peasant farmer undertakes. The best position is the gentle slope at the foot of a hill-side, where the vines can get plenty of sun and air above, and deep ground below in which to sink their long and spreading roots. The ground must be cleared of rocks and stones, and a wall built about it to protect the precious crop. The earth must be cleared of weeds and rubbish in a manner which is unthought of for the corn crop, and the hoe must be busy all the time, lest the plants be choked by the weeds and thorns which spring up with unbridled luxuriance wherever their presence goes unnoticed for a time.

In a large vineyard a tower is built for a watchman, for this crop has many enemies, and must be guarded

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very carefully. Watch must be kept for thieves, who climb the walls at night to steal the precious bunches, and watch must be kept for animals, which will do terrible mischief among the vines if once they break into the vineyard.

Wolves, bears, jackals, foxes, and the village dogs, all are very fond of grapes, and some of them are very nimble and not easily kept out. As the vintage-time draws near, the keeper of the vineyard gathers a great store of thorn-bushes and lays them along the top of the walls. The thorns project beyond the wall, and the bushes are weighted with stones to keep them in place. This prevents animals from getting in and stealing the grapes.

The vineyard supplies fresh fruit, raisins, and wine. The fresh grapes are eaten in great quantities during their season, the months of September and October, and still greater quantities are dried for the winter's store. In a warm, open spot in the vineyard a smooth floor is prepared, and here bunches of grapes are spread out to dry. The bunches are frequently turned, and are sprinkled with olive oil to keep the skin moist. If the weather is hot and dry the grapes become raisins in about a fortnight, but unfavourable weather, cloudy or misty, prolongs the time required, and the raisins are not so well flavoured, and are of darker colour. When the raisins are ready, the women store them carefully in the earthen bins, and they form a valuable part of the food-supply of the year.



SYRIAN SHEPHERDS AND SHEPHERD BOY. Page 37.

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When wine is to be made, the ripe grapes are carried to the winepress. The winepress is always cut out of the living rock, and is a hollow about 18 inches deep and 4 feet square. The bottom slopes to one corner, and from this corner a channel is cut to a second hollow below, smaller in extent, but much deeper than the first. The grapes are thrown into the upper cavity in the rock, and then the owners of the vineyard—men, women, and children—spring in and tread the grapes with their feet. As they tread they sing and clap their hands in time with their movements.

When the grapes have been pressed and broken by the feet, a large flat stone is laid upon them, and the pressing finished by this stone, which is forced down by a large weighted beam. The juice flows through the channel in the corner of the upper trough and collects in the lower, and from the latter it is drawn off in vessels. Part of the juice is allowed to go sour, to form vinegar, and the remainder is made into wine. As a rule this industry is confined to the Christian peasantry, for the Moslem is forbidden by his religion to touch wine.

The hot summer days see the ripening of the figs also. The peasant sets great store by his fig-trees, for the fruit is of much service both fresh and dry. During August and September the ripe figs are largely used for food, and on every housetop they are spread out in large quantities to dry for winter use. This is the time of the main fig harvest; but there are earlier and

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later figs, though in much smaller quantities. The early figs are gathered about a month before the regular crops, though they appear on the same trees. They are large and juicy, and are esteemed a great delicacy as being the first figs of the season. The later figs will hang on the trees until almost the end of the year, and, though large, their flavour is not so good as that of the summer fruit.

When figs are drying they are carefully turned from time to time, and are put under shelter at night, to protect them from the heavy dews, which would spoil them if they were left without covering. When dry, the fruit is strung upon thin cord and hung up, or stored in the bins.

When grapes and figs have been gathered, and October has returned, with its promise of rain before long, the farmer turns to the olive-trees to secure the last and greatest crop of his year. The olive-tree, with its grey-green foliage, its gnarled trunk and twisted boughs, is a familiar feature in the landscape of the Holy Land, and its fruit forms a great source of wealth. It is considered that the farmer can depend more surely for money on his olive-grove than on his wheat-field, and a failure of the olive-crop is the greatest blow the peasant can receive.

An olive-grove rarely belongs to one man. As a rule it is the property of a village, and each peasant owns one or more trees in it. In this case no one is allowed to touch an olive until an appointed day, when

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all go to the grove and work day by day until the crop is gathered. This is done so that no one may steal from his neighbour's trees.

The olive is a most profitable tree because it comes into bearing in a few years, and then continues to produce fruit every other year until it attains a great age. It blossoms in late spring, and the tree is covered with tiny cream-coloured flowers, and presents a beautiful sight. If but a small portion of these flowers comes to maturity, the tree bears an enormous weight of the green, plum-shaped fruit.

The best olive oil is pressed from fruit so ripe as to fall from the tree of itself, but it is very rarely that fruit is left so long. Generally the olives are beaten from the trees by means of long sticks. Down they patter in thousands, and are gathered by the women and children into large baskets.

Some are pickled and preserved for eating, but most are carried to the oil-press. First the olives are crushed by a huge stone wheel running round a central pivot on a great circular block of stone. The stone wheel converts the fruit into a black, pasty mass, and it is now ready for the oil-press proper. The mass of crushed olives is placed in baskets woven of tough grass, and five or six baskets are placed one above the other on a stone slab, above which a huge beam is fixed by a hinge to the wall. The beam is forced down by a screw, and under the pressure the oil pours through the sides of the baskets and streams on to the slab. In

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the latter, gutters are cut, and these gutters conduct the oil into a stone trough placed to receive it. From the trough the oil is drawn off into goat-skins and jars, and carried into the towns for sale.

Olives and olive oil are largely used in the farmer's food. The oil is of much service in cooking the simple dishes of wheat and rice; the olive is the chief relish of a hasty meal. The labouring man of Syria eats bread and olives as our labourers eat bread and cheese.

Even the poorest may get their little stock of olives for the winter. They have a right to glean after the general gathering is over, and they search the trees branch by branch, and often gather a good store of the less ripe fruit which did not fall easily, or of ripe fruit which had been overlooked. This gleaning is a great feature of Palestine to-day. Just as Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, so the poor in the Holy Land still glean in the fields and vineyards of their richer neighbours, and thus they, too, have their little stores of corn and oil, olives and raisins.

And now the Syrian year has run its round. Once more the skies are darkening with the promise of the "former rains." The peasant is looking out plough and yoke and goad, is preparing his seed-corn to fling on the waiting land; his labours are about to begin anew.

The Syrian Shepherd

CHAPTER VIII

THE SYRIAN SHEPHERD

THE Bible is full of allusions to the shepherd and his flock, and the scenes which furnished those allusions may still be seen, quite unaltered, in the Holy Land to-day. Still the shepherd leads his flock beside the still waters, and finds them a cool and shady place in the shelter of a great rock when the fierce midday sun beats down in overpowering radiance. He knows his sheep by name, and calls them around him when they stray, and carries the lambs in his arms when they are too feeble to clamber over the wild, rocky slopes where the flock is searching for pasture.

In Palestine the sheep depend upon the shepherd, and the shepherd must care for his sheep in a manner we cannot easily grasp. In England a shepherd can leave his flock in a meadow, and go home and return in the morning to find them in safety. Not so in Palestine. In the first place, the Syrian sheep are never placed in a field, as we understand a field. The only enclosure they know is a sheep-fold, where they can be penned closely for safety, but cannot find food. When feeding, they wander far and wide over the open country, exposed to the attacks of robbers and wild beasts, and their only guard is the shepherd, who may be aided by one or two strong dogs.

The dogs are not used to drive the sheep, for the

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sheep are not driven, but led. The shepherd goes before them, and they follow him closely. The work of the dogs is to drive off wild beasts, and to warn the shepherd of the approach of thieves at night. Day and night the shepherd is with his flock. By day he may be seen leaning on his staff while his sheep pasture about him. From time to time he utters a peculiar call, to let his flock know that he is at hand ; and so long as they hear his call they continue to graze quietly. But let him move away, only to a short distance, and then you see how well the sheep understand that they depend entirely upon him for protection. The feeding animals raise their heads and begin to run after him at once. If he calls in a certain tone or begins to play on his reed-flute, they know that he is about to lead them to a change of pasture, and follow closely, the lambs capering around him.

“One of the most interesting sights of shepherd life is to watch a flock fording a stream. The shepherd leads, as usual, and the sheep follow in a string at his heels ; but in the middle of the stream they begin to lose their footing, and drift with the current. The shepherd hurries forward, grasping first one and then another, pushing as many as he can reach in front of him and hauling others up against the pressure of the water. As soon as he reaches the opposite side he hastens along the bank and draws out those that have been swept down . . . and have reached the other side faint with the struggle. Nor does he

The Syrian Shepherd

relax his efforts until the whole of his flock is safely ashore."

The shepherd still wears the ancient garb, and carries the things that shepherds used of old. He has his great cloak of sheep-skin or cloth, which forms a coat by day and a blanket by night; he carries scrip and gourd, rod and staff. His scrip is a large bag, made of the skin of a kid. In this he stores his simple fare of bread, olives, raisins, cheese, and dried figs; his gourd contains water or milk.

Hanging at his side or thrust through his girdle is a stout club, the "rod" of the Bible. This club is his weapon of defence, and is usually made of oak. He chooses for this purpose a straight young tree, and tears it up by the roots. The root-knot is trimmed to a round head as big as a man's fist, and the handle is dressed down to a convenient thickness for the grasp, and the club carefully seasoned. Into the heavy knob he drives nails with large heads; the cudgel is now, in the hands of a strong man, a most terrible weapon. With so formidable a club it is easy to believe that David could have slain either lion or bear when he was guarding his flock.

The staff is of the same wood, a plain, straight stick without fork or crook, some 6 feet in length. The shepherd uses it to assist him in clambering over the rocks, to strike off small twigs and leaves to feed his flock, or to punish and part fighting goats.

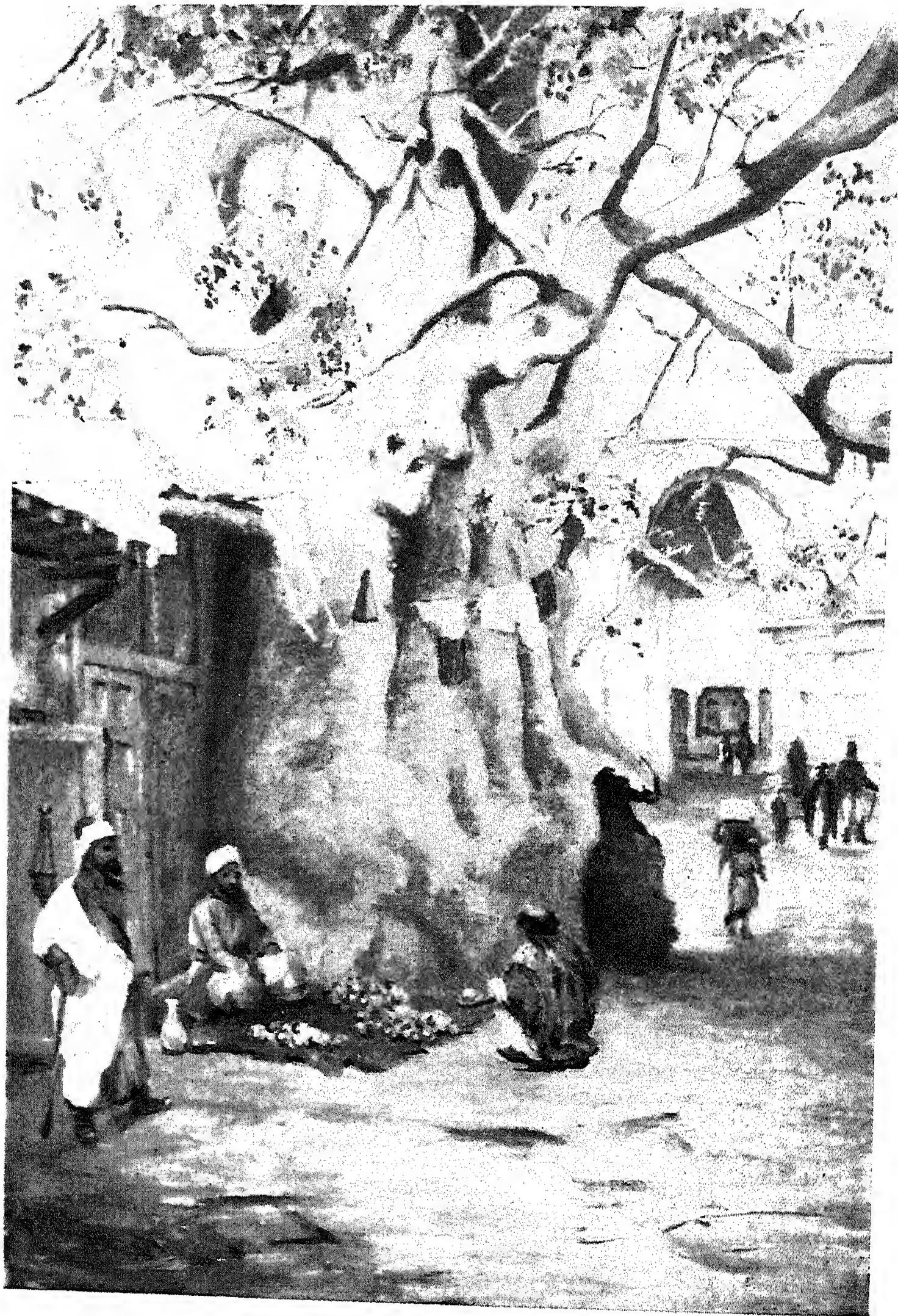
As night draws on, the shepherd leads his flock

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towards the sheep-fold. This may be an enclosure surrounded by a rude stone wall or by a hedge of thorns, or it may be a cave in the hill-side, its mouth blocked by a line of stones. In either case the shepherd has a little hut of branches near the entrance, where he keeps watch over his flock. Sheep, above all, need constant care, as they fall so easy a prey to wild beasts. If a wolf appears, the sheep scatter in flight, and are easily seized. Not so the goats. These close together and form a solid mass, their horns to the front and ready for an assailant.

In the wilder parts of the country the shepherd must be on the alert at night, and he finds one or two faithful dogs of great assistance, both to give help and to give warning. Jackals, hyenas, and wolves prowl about the folds, and at times leopards have been known to work great havoc. But, as a rule, it is the fierce, cunning grey wolf which does the most mischief, and many are the battles between him and the faithful dogs who keep unceasing watch over the flock. A good dog will kill a wolf in single combat, and such an animal is a treasure to its owner, and made much of. A Syrian sheep-dog has been known to offer battle to a leopard in defence of the sheep ; but here the combat was too unequal, and the brave dog was slain.

Wolves are dangerous, not only by night, but often in broad daylight. A shepherd had one day led his sheep to a small valley not more than a mile from a large village. The valley was dotted with bushes, and



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as he sat under the shade of a tree, he saw two creatures moving through the scrub, and creeping towards a sheep which had wandered a little away from the rest. He watched, and at last made out that they were two great wolves. Suddenly the wolves leapt out in the open and darted on the sheep. The shepherd ran to the spot, drawing his club from his girdle as he ran.

The wolves were dragging the sheep away as he rushed up to them ; but on hearing his cries, the two savage beasts left their victim and flew straight at the shepherd. He launched a tremendous blow at them and caught one on the back, and felled it to the ground with its backbone broken right through. But the club flew from his hand, and the second wolf, a huge grey brute, seized him by his arm and made its long, sharp teeth meet in his flesh. The shepherd clutched its neck with his free hand, and there was a long, fierce struggle, in which the man fought hard for his life. At length he managed to drive the head of the wolf against a stone, and partially stunned it. Now he had a chance to seize his club, and a single blow dashed out the brains of the savage beast.

Thieves and robbers sometimes attack a sheep-fold, but, as a rule, these rogues prefer to make an attempt on a flock which is spending the night in the open country. Then four or five thieves creep up upon different sides until they are quite near to the flock. Now a signal is given by the leader, and every man fires his gun into the air. The flashes and the noise

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startle the sheep, which run in all directions. The bewildered shepherd does not know which way to turn first in the darkness, and in the confusion the thieves seize as many sheep as they can and make off with their booty.

If this takes place near a town, the shepherd has a good idea where to look for his stolen sheep or goats. He sets off at once to the town, and goes to the butchers to ask if they have bought any animals lately, and, if so, he demands to see them. Or if they have killed that day, he demands to be shown the heads and hides of the slaughtered animals. He knows at once whether these came from his flock or not, and if they did, he claims compensation from the authorities.

The thieves get rid of the stolen animals because they do not dare to keep them, and to sell them to the butchers is the quickest way of turning the theft to account. They do not dare to keep them because the shepherd would recognize his own sheep or goats instantly, and the robbery would be brought home to them. The power of an Eastern shepherd to identify any animal under his care borders upon the marvellous. He often has a name for every sheep, and he can always point out a number of particulars which mark out any given sheep from the rest, though to the eye of a stranger one sheep looks exactly like another.

“One day a missionary, meeting a shepherd on one of the wildest parts of the Lebanon, asked him various questions about his sheep, and, among others, if he

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counted them every night. On answering that he did not, he was asked how he knew if they were all **there** or not. His reply was: 'Master, if you were to **put a** cloth over my eyes, and bring me any sheep, and **only** let me put my hands on its face, I could tell **in a** moment if it was mine or not."

Sometimes half a dozen different flocks are **penned** in a single fold, and by the morning the animals **are** mixed, so that it would seem a difficult task to **sort** them out. But the shepherds do not attempt any **such** thing. The gates of the fold are opened, and **the** crowd of animals begins to stream out, eager to **return** to the feeding-ground. Then the shepherds **separate**, and stand at different points around the fold, and **each** man utters his own call. The mass of sheep and goats breaks up at once, each flock running to its **own** shepherd as he moves slowly away, calling and calling. In a few minutes the fold is empty, and the flocks **are** moving off in every direction, each following its shepherd and heading away to the hill-sides, **where** they will spend the long warm day in searching **for** the scanty herbage.

CHAPTER IX

IN A SYRIAN CITY—I

THE traveller enters a Syrian city through a **massive** gate, and this gate he must pass before sunset if **he** does not wish to spend a night outside the walls.

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Until within very recent times not a house was found beyond the gate. Everyone lived in the shelter of the walls, lest his house should be attacked and plundered by robbers.

Upon entering the city you look in vain for broad streets and fine houses. The streets are narrow, winding lanes, and often built over so that they look like black tunnels twisting and turning under high walls. The houses are of a mean appearance, the walls of mud, or with high, blank faces of stone turned towards the street. The streets are narrow, and covered over to keep out the sun, and the houses are mean and dull-looking, to turn aside the suspicion that the owner is wealthy.

In Syria a native may have great wealth and build himself a most magnificent home, but he takes care to hide it. His Turkish masters will tax him the more heavily if they discover he is wealthy, and in times of disturbance a turbulent mob would be tempted to assail and plunder a place of outward splendour. In the East there is always an eye to defence in planning a house, so that the dwelling of a rich man is often approached by a winding passage, which can easily be defended, or entered by one small door in a high, thick wall, the latter unbroken by any other opening.

You may turn aside from the street and pick your way over heaps of rubbish and dirty refuse towards a door, which looks as if it might lead into a cowshed. You knock on the door, and a tiny lattice is opened

In a Syrian City

and the porter looks out. Seeing you are a person to be admitted, he opens the door, lets you in, and promptly shuts and fastens it again.

You walk along a narrow, horseshoe-shaped passage, step out into a noble court, and gasp with wonder. The house, with its mean and filthy approach, its air of a tumble-down dungeon without, is a splendid palace within. You are standing in a spacious court, beautifully clean, and paved with great slabs of black and white marble. The air is perfumed with the blossom of orange, lemon, and jessamine trees, which grow about lovely marble fountains, the latter throwing cool, murmuring jets of water into the warm air, and with goldfish lazily swimming in the broad basins.

Into the court look the windows of the rooms in which the owners live, and every square inch of the lofty walls is full of beauty. Designs of many-coloured stones and marble fret the surface all over, and the windows are set in frames of delicately carved wood, and are of beautiful design. Several of the lower rooms open on the courtyard, and the most important of these is the reception-hall, where the master of the house sits with his friends and guests.

This room is thickly carpeted, and furnished with low, broad seats, called divans, upon which the natives sit with crossed legs amid cushions of embroidered satin, velvet, and gold. The walls are inlaid with lovely mosaics of coloured marbles, or covered with wainscoting of precious woods, carved and gilded, and inset

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with delicate inlays of ivory, ebony, and mother-of-pearl. And amid this splendour sit the owner and his friends, chatting, and smoking their long pipes, and looking out on trees and fountains and beds of lovely flowers, while the stranger would pass the place and never dream of the beauty and magnificence hidden behind the dirty, wretched-looking exterior.

But we will now return to the streets, and, after the clean courtyard, they seem dirtier and more offensive than before. A city street is the universal dust-heap for its inhabitants. Rubbish and filth of all kinds are cast into it, and there allowed to remain until they rot. The only scavengers are the city dogs, which eat everything that can by any possibility be devoured.

These dogs belong to no man, and lie about the streets in the sun, when they are not searching round the offal-heaps for food. They are of service because they devour kitchen refuse, which is flung into the street, and so do the little that is ever done towards cleansing the city ways.

They look more like wolves than dogs, are black or tawny yellow in colour, and are as fierce as they look. If a stranger were to try to pat one he would get badly bitten, for the street dog expects a kick instead of a caress, and does not understand kindness. Yet, when kindly treated, they will become as attached and faithful as any household pet.

Each quarter of the city has its own band of dogs, and the latter keep strictly to their own hunting-

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grounds. If a strange dog dares to venture over the dividing-line in search of food, the band is on him at once. They fly at him and fasten on him, roll him in the dirt, and bite and worry him in the most savage fashion. He is a lucky dog if he gets back to his own quarter with no more than the loss of his ears and the half of his tail.

The narrow streets are filled with streams of people, on foot, on horses, on mules, or on camels. When the camels come along you have to skip out of the way, and quickly too. The camel may bear a rider or bear a load, the latter perhaps of stones slung across his back in two huge sacks. In any case, he stalks straight on down the middle of the way, and you must squeeze against the walls in order to avoid being bruised by his burden, if it be a bulky one.

A native crowd offers a feast of colour to the eye. Men and women are robed from head to foot, but while the bright eyes and brown faces of the men are shown beneath their caps or turbans, the women are veiled, for an Eastern woman thinks it very wrong indeed that a strange man should see her face. So she wears a long veil, which wraps her from head to foot, save for a slit through which she peeps.

The robes are of every colour and the brightest shades. Purple, crimson, sky-blue, grass-green, indigo, yellow, and flaming scarlet shine in the brilliant sunlight, and are relieved by the white, which occurs to some extent in almost every dress. A wealthy

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Turk, who is a high official, rides by in robes of rich white silk, mounted on a white ass, with gorgeous trappings of scarlet saddle-cloths embroidered with gold, his feet in red slippers thrust into stirrups of silver. He is attended by two black slaves, while a forerunner goes before him to clear the way. The forerunner has a staff in his hand, and he calls to the people to stand aside, and drives off the dogs lying in the path.

Behind the grandee comes the almost naked figure of a water-seller, one of the poorest of the city toilers. He has his water-skin slung over his bare shoulders, and he rattles together the two brass cups from which his customers drink, and calls aloud, praising the sweet water he has drawn from some famous well. Then follow Jews, Christians, Moslems, negroes ; men white, brown, black, and olive of complexion, every tongue and race of the East and West, with throngs of laden donkeys and mules, and here and there a litter carried by slaves and containing some Moslem lady, who peers through the lattice of her carriage at the passers-by.

Among the crowd the Bedouins are easily to be distinguished. These children of the desert, wrapped in their cloaks of brown camel's hair, are lost in wonder at the sights around them. Coming from the lonely spaces of the wilderness, the Bedouin feels that he can scarcely breathe in these close lanes and amid the multitude that surrounds him. He stares in wonder at the many shops where merchants offer for sale a thousand things that he never saw or heard of before, his few and



WATER CARRIER. *Page 48.*

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simple wants having been satisfied by the produce of his flock and the labour of his own hands.

CHAPTER X

IN A SYRIAN CITY—II

THE shops which so fascinate the son of the desert seem very simple affairs in the eyes of a European. They are small stalls or booths, or, perhaps, not more than a hole in a wall, which the owner at night closes with a pair of shutters, fastening the shutters with a huge, clumsy padlock.

When the shopkeeper begins his day, he sets out his wares, then squats down in a corner of his shop, and sits there in solemn silence waiting for customers. He never utters a word or does a thing to attract anyone to his stall: it is not the custom to do so, and custom is all-powerful in the East. If people stop and buy his goods, very well; if no one pauses to purchase, he sits in his corner apparently as calm and contented as ever.

The shops are all gathered together in a portion of the town known as the bazaar. The bazaar of an Eastern city is a labyrinth of narrow lanes, sometimes so narrow that two people can scarcely pass each other, and a stranger could no more find his way through them than if he were set in the midst of a maze.

Every street of the bazaar has a name. It is not painted up anywhere, and yet it is very easy to find

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out ; you just look at the things in the shops. All the shops of one kind are gathered together in one street, so that to purchase a variety of things you must visit several parts of the bazaar.

One of the most interesting streets is the Street of the Goldsmiths. Here may be seen the workers in gold or silver plying their trade, and often making ornaments while their customers wait. The tools of the goldsmith are very simple. He has a little brazier of charcoal and a little pair of bellows, a small anvil and some tiny hammers, a pair of tongs not much bigger than tweezers, and graving tools. With these he turns out delicate filigree work and all kinds of things for personal adornment in gold and silver. He does a great deal more in silver than in gold, and you would be surprised to see that many of his customers for heavy, nay, massive, silver ornaments look like quite poor women. Here is a barefooted peasant woman, who is adjusting with much pride a large silver armlet worth many dollars : the rest of her attire would be dear at a few pence.

Yes, but those ornaments represent the family savings. The peasant with a little money to spare knows nothing of putting it in a bank ; he may dig a hole and bury it, but, if someone finds the hole, it is good-bye to his hard-earned savings. So the silver dollars are laid out in an anklet or armlet, or chain, necklace or bracelet, and this is worn by the peasant's wife. In this way a woman of a well-to-do family is

In a Syrian City

often loaded with ornaments of gold and silver, and if the needs of the household should call for ready money, she will pledge her ornaments for the sum needed. This is so customary a proceeding that not the least notice is taken of a woman handing over her jewellery to her creditor ; when the debt is repaid, she is brave in her ornaments once more.

The Street of the Potters is lined with stalls upon which are heaped up the earthenware jars which every housewife has in continual use. The making and selling of jars and earthenware vessels is one of the most important and thriving of industries. A large number of pots, pans, and jars are needed for storing articles, for cooking purposes, and for carrying water ; and a large number get broken. This is good for the potters, and, as a familiar proverb runs in Arabic, “ If there were no breakages, there would be no potteries.”

These earthenware vessels are very cheap. A hand pitcher costs about one halfpenny, and a large jar, in which water is fetched from a fountain or well, costs rather less than twopence. Broken potsherds lie round every house, and in heaps round every well, and so it has always been. When explorers are digging in search of a buried city, the first sign of their success is almost certain to be the discovery of broken pots, cast aside by those in whose hands they came to pieces thousands of years ago.

In the Street of the Shoemakers the stalls are much gayer than our boot and shoe shops, which show leather

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in black and brown shades only. Eastern shoes are as bright as Eastern clothes. They are really slippers without heels, and, as a native man or woman walks along, you think their shoes will slip off at the next moment, but they never do. Yet the native is always ready to slip his shoes off, and that is why they are made in this loose fashion. No Eastern man or woman enters a house or church with shoes on ; the shoes are drawn off and left outside. At the door of a house where many people have gathered the sight is very quaint. The ground is covered with a wonderful collection of shoes—old and new, sound and broken, bright and worn, big and little, and so mixed up that you wonder how each person will find his own pair again.

But we were speaking of the gay colours of the new shoes on the stalls in the Street of the Shoemakers. The slippers for women are of a pretty lemon shade, pointed at the toe, and the dearer ones are made of fine pliable leather, as soft as a kid glove. Yellow for women, red for men, that is the rule ; and the men's slippers are of bright red with heavier soles. Then there are long red riding-boots for horsemen, and these are worked in gay patterns with gold and silver thread, and adorned with large tassels.

The shopkeeper is the shoemaker himself. He sits at the back of his tiny shop, squatting cross-legged on a board and working away busily, cutting and stitching, nor does he raise his eyes unless a customer pauses and

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asks him the price of a pair of shoes. Then begins a long haggle, for nothing has a fixed price. The amount demanded depends upon the appearance of the customer and the idea which the shopkeeper forms of the length of his purse. A heated debate will rage for a long time over a difference of a few halfpence between buyer and seller, but once the bargain is made, all becomes calm, and they part with amiable smiles and the politest of compliments.

The Street of the Saddlers is gayer still. Here the stalls are adorned with the most gorgeous trappings for horses, donkeys, and mules. In the East the rank and wealth of a native is shown at once by the trappings of the animal on which he rides. The more splendid the saddle and saddle-cloths, the more lofty the station of the rider. There are saddles of crimson leather, with fittings and embroideries of gold, solid silver stirrups, and saddle-cloths of every colour of the rainbow. The reins are of crimson silk worked with thread of gold, and the equipage, when placed upon a magnificent Arab horse or a donkey white as milk, shines and glitters in the sun with rich and striking effect.

The Street of the Brass-Workers is another important working centre. In every better-class house there are many articles of brass—plates, pans, dishes, saucepans, and chargers, such as that upon which the daughter of Herodias carried the head of John the Baptist. Even in the poorest house there will be some small vessels of brass kept for great occasions, and so the brass-workers

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find plenty of employment, and are a busy and prosperous class of tradesmen.

Many of the articles for sale on their stalls are very old. Brass vessels, when properly used and cared for, are very enduring, and you may often find plates and cups bearing inscriptions and designs which show that they belonged to kings and great men who lived hundreds of years ago. Brass basins and ewers for the washing of hands after meals are formed in quaint and graceful designs, and there are brass trays of all sizes, from large ones, for holding coffee-cups, down to tiny ones for holding cigarette ashes, but all engraved in delicate and graceful patterns.

And through these streets, and many more like them occupied by other trades, the busy throng ebbs and flows ceaselessly as long as the day is bright. But with the fall of the sun and the onset of the swift Eastern dusk, the bazaar empties as if by magic. The shops are closed, the traders hurry away to their homes, the streets clear swiftly, and everyone seeks the shelter and safety of his own fortress-like house. The public ways become silent and lonely under the stars, and only the street dogs prowl from heap to heap of garbage. So passes the night, and with the sudden upspringing of the sun all wake to life and activity, and again a new, bright, bustling, noisy day begins.

Scenes by the Way

CHAPTER XI

SCENES BY THE WAY

THE traveller who leaves the beaten tracks of the Holy Land must be prepared for rough ways and hard faring—nay, he may keep to many fairly beaten tracks and make a rough journey of it. The roads are bad, and very often, to a European, do not seem to be worthy of the name. They are rough or stony, or soft and sandy, and no one ever dreams of improving or mending them. If a slough lies in the way, the track takes a turn round it ; if a broken, rocky piece of country is encountered, the track breaks up into a hundred different paths, according as one wayfarer or another has taken a fancy to pick his way across.

The traveller must carry his own tents and provide for his own accommodation. He may hit on a very poor inn or a village where he can have a resting-place, or he may not. If he is wise he will prefer a mattress in his own tent to the vermin-haunted native dwelling, where sleep for him will be impossible.

To the eye of an English traveller the Holy Land seems a country singularly empty of inhabitants. There are no wayside cottages, no scattered hamlets. At wide intervals he passes a village, and a long journey may lie between town and town.

There is a good reason why no wayside houses are to be seen : it is that in Palestine safety is only found

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in numbers, and so people are gathered in villages for mutual aid in face of the bands of Bedouin robbers who haunt the land.

The Bedouins are Arabs, the children of the desert, dwellers in tents, who drive their flocks and herds from pasture to pasture and from well to well, as food and water grow scarce in the neighbourhood where they have stayed for some time. They are striking and picturesque figures, these sons of the desert, when seated on their swift steeds, with flowing robes draped around their tall, spare, sinewy figures, and long spears held aloft. But they are figures greatly feared by the peasantry, for the Bedouin is a born raider, and attacks all from whom he can hope to gain the smallest treasure. A Bedouin will calmly ride his mare into the standing corn of the Syrian farmer, and there permit it to pasture at ease, and he is prompt to strike with spear or shoot with his long-barrelled gun if he is interfered with.

His encampment shows one of the earliest forms of human dwellings, the low tent of black hair-cloth pegged down to the ground—a dwelling which may be struck, packed, carried, and pitched again promptly and easily.

Wild and dangerous as these men are, they have one great virtue—hospitality. A guest is sacred, and the Arab host will defend a guest with his life. The great mark of friendship is to eat salt together, for the Arabs regard salt as the symbol of life and eternity; the



A BEOUIN ENCAMPMENT. Page 56.

Scenes by the Way

“covenant of salt” binds two men together with a band of steel.

An English traveller once fell into the hands of a band of Arab robbers. He knew that his property and his life were both in great danger, but without exhibiting the least sign of fear he took a tin box out of his pocket, and began to eat the contents as if he were enjoying a delicious sweetmeat. The Arab chief looked into the box, and saw that it held a fine white powder. He did not dream for a moment that it was salt, for he had never seen salt except in coarse, discoloured lumps. Eager to find what it was that his captive ate so greedily, he took a pinch and put it in his mouth. To his astonishment, it was salt, and now he had bound himself to treat his prisoner as an honoured guest ; he had made the “covenant of salt” with him.

As the traveller passes from ridge to ridge and from valley to valley, he sees the country dotted with little white buildings, each consisting of a low, square tower crowned by a dome, all whitewashed and glittering brightly in the sun. Each building is a *weli*, and is erected in honour of some Moslem saint. The land abounds with them, and some are looked upon with great reverence. Sick people visit a famous *weli* in hopes of gaining relief ; the very earth around it is carried off to be used as medicine. A tree near at hand will be decked with a host of rags fluttering in the wind, for every woman who visits the tomb will hang up a scrap of rag in token of some vow made in honour

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of the saint. The keeper of a *weli* often becomes a wealthy man, since he receives many presents from those who visit the spot.

Around the *weli* may often be seen ploughs and other articles of much value to the peasantry. They are placed there with a view to safety. The thief, to whom nothing would be too hot or too heavy elsewhere, dare not remove things placed under the protection of the saint, and the farmer may go far from home if his precious tools are left in the open near the sacred place.

The traveller knows that a *weli* is near when he sees a pile of stones beside the way. It is the custom for pilgrims travelling to a famous shrine to pause at the spot where it first comes into sight, and repeat a prayer, and drop a stone there to call the attention of those who follow, that they also may look and pray. Sometimes, instead of a little cairn, a number of stones—five, six, or seven—are cleverly balanced one on the other in a little column.

It is a profitable occupation to be the keeper of a *weli*, and so it is no wonder that they abound. The peasantry tell sly stories of some of them, and hint that there is nothing very wonderful in the shrine after all. As Colonel Wilson says :

“ Many Moslem shrines are of doubtful authenticity. The Arabs delight to tell the story of one Sheikh Mohammed, who was the keeper of a *weli* of eminent sanctity, the tomb of a noted saint. Pilgrims thronged

Scenes by the Way

to it from every side, and Mohammed grew rich from their costly offerings. At length, his servant, Ali, dissatisfied with his meagre share of the revenue, ran away to the east of the Jordan, taking his master's donkey. The donkey died on the road, and Ali, having covered his body with a heap of stones, sat down in despair. A passer-by asked him why he sat thus in lonely grief. He replied that he had found the tomb of an eminent saint. The man kissed the stones, and giving Ali a present, passed on. The news of the holy *weli* spread through the land. Pilgrims thronged to Ali, who grew rich, built a fair *kubbeh*, or dome, and was the envy of all the Sheikhs. Mohammed, hearing of the new *weli*, and finding his own quite eclipsed by its growing popularity, made a pilgrimage to it in hopes of ascertaining the source of its great repute. On finding Ali in charge, he whispered to him, and asked the name of the saint whose tomb he had in charge. Ali said: 'I will tell you on condition that you tell me the name of your saint.' Mohammed consenting, Ali whispered: 'God alone is great; this is the tomb of the donkey I stole from you.' 'Mashallah!' said Mohammed, 'and my *weli* is the tomb of that donkey's father.' "

As the dusk draws on, the traveller looks for a place in which to spend the night. If he is travelling with a strong party they may camp in the open, setting their servants to watch in turn if danger be feared. A small party will pass the night in or near a village. In the village there is usually a house, called a guest house, at

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the service of passing travellers. If there is no guest-house, a "keeper" is often hired. This is one of the villagers, who, armed with sword and club, watches the tents of the stranger for payment.

CHAPTER XII

CHILD LIFE IN THE HOLY LAND

IN a Syrian family the boys are everything, the girls are nothing. The birth of a boy is hailed with joy, and even the poor will pay for performers to come with instruments of music to celebrate the happy occasion, but the birth of a girl is received with dismal faces and loud laments.

This seems all very wrong and foolish to us, but it springs quite naturally from the customs of the country. A son remains as a bulwark and a defender of his house all his life long. But a daughter, upon her marriage, is entirely lost to her own family, and is expected to devote herself to her new home.

We have spoken of the swaddling clothes which bind the limbs of a new-born infant, and when these are removed the child is carried in a bag on its mother's back until it gains a little strength, when it is swung on to her shoulder, and there it rides astride, clutching its mother's head to keep its balance.

The child may have clothes on it, or it may not; that depends on the season of the year. It is certain to

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be decked with an array of charms and amulets. These are intended to preserve it from the fascination of the evil eye. The power of the evil eye is most firmly believed in by the people of Palestine, whether Christians, Moslems, or Jews. They hold that there are certain people who, by the mere glance of the eye, have power to bring evil to those they look upon, and that this evil may be turned aside by the wearing of some charm.

The favourite charm is a blue bead, and so a blue bead forms part not only of everyone's dress, but of the trappings of animals. A blue bead shines in a child's hair or is fastened around its neck by a string ; it is placed in a man's turban or hidden in a woman's veil ; it is stitched into a pack-saddle to preserve the animal from harm.

These blue beads are intended for a rough representation of the eye which causes the mischief, and are blue because blue eyes are believed to have a specially evil influence, and their owners are generally dreaded. Sometimes the charm takes the form of a hand, and typifies the "Hand of Might"—that is, the protecting Hand of God.

Parents are very unwilling that anyone should admire their children. To look admiringly at a child is a form of the evil eye, and to prevent this from happening, wealthy people will dress their children in the oldest, the dirtiest, the most ragged clothes, and let them run about filthy and unkempt. For the same reason boys will be dressed as girls.

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From their earliest years the children are familiar with many superstitious beliefs, and act upon them. A traveller remarks that one morning he was riding out of a village when he met a little peasant girl going to fetch water. Now, it is regarded as most unlucky to meet anyone going on a journey with an empty water-jar ; as the jar is empty, so the journey, too, will be void of good fortune. It is the height of good manners to smash the jar into pieces, in order that the ill-omen may be averted. But the little girl belonged to a very poor household, and dared not do this ; so she whipped the jar from her head, and thrust her arm into it up to the shoulder so that it might not remain empty.

The boys and girls of Palestine now have a much better chance of learning to read and write than their parents ever enjoyed. Of late years many schools have been opened in the towns and villages, and teachers have been appointed. In Christian villages the teachers are appointed by the Churches to which the people belong ; in Moslem villages, by the Turkish Government. Reading, writing, and a little arithmetic are taught in these schools, and the Moslem children spend a great deal of time over the Koran, the sacred book of their faith. They learn to recite many chapters by heart, and their writing copies are set from its texts.

The salaries of these teachers are very small, and paid sometimes in money, sometimes in kind. Thus, in a Moslem village, the *khatib*, who is a religious instructor as well as a schoolmaster, often receives so

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much grain from each family. He also fills in his spare time by other labours, and may be the village carpenter or cobbler as well. The poor *khatib* does not always receive his dues, and that is why he is glad to do other work ; but a story is told of one clever *khatib* who outwitted his neighbours finely.

When the villagers threshed their corn he went round to collect his allowance of grain ; but every man put him off with one story or another, and he came home as empty-handed as he had set out. Friday came—the Moslem Sabbath—and the people of the village gathered at the mosque. But no *khatib* was there, and without him as leader of the prayers no service could be held. Some of the elders hurried to his house and asked him why he had not come to the mosque.

“Oh,” said he, “I am not coming. The service is not carried out in proper order. For instance, there are men who rise from their prostrations before I do, and that is not right. No one should rise before the leader.” The elders allowed that it was wrong to do so, and they agreed to put a most solemn curse upon any man who should rise before the *khatib*, and upon these terms he promised to conduct the service.

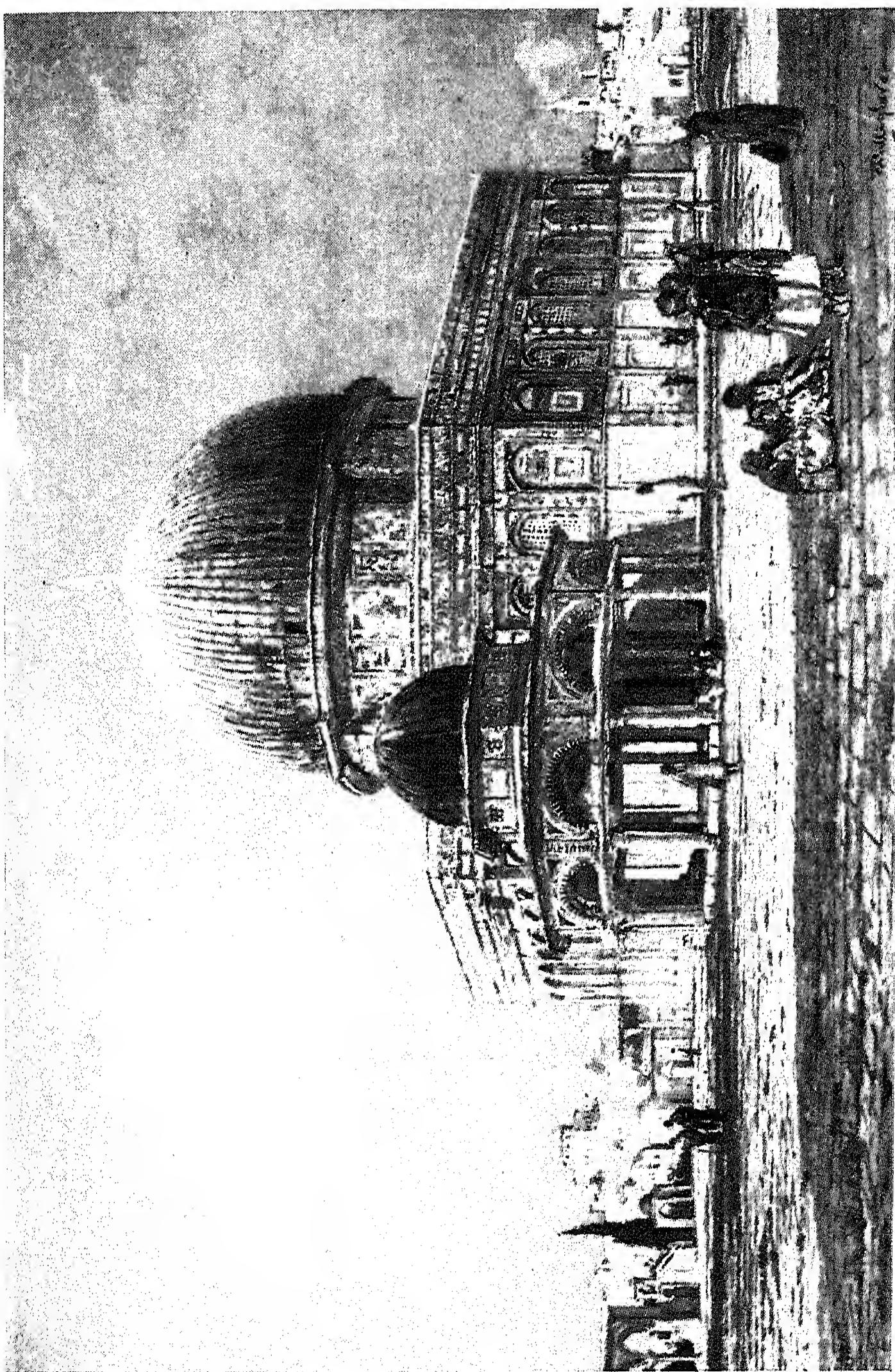
At the close of the service the *khatib* bent to the ground for the final prayer, and the people bent with him. But he did not rise ; and no one else dared rise for fear of the curse. At last, some called to him to rise and let them go. Then the *khatib* said : “Yes, I will rise when every man has paid me the corn he owes.”

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Seeing that the cunning *khatib* had them safe in his clutch, the villagers gave way. The men shouted to their wives to bring the corn, and not until the full amount of grain had been delivered to the *khatib*'s sons would he lift his head from the floor of the mosque.

At busy times these village schools are closed, and the children turn into the fields, gardens, or vineyards to help their parents. Very often they are set to herd a small flock of sheep or goats ; but this would be near the village, for a child could not be trusted to take animals into the open country, where wolves or robbers might be met. The little girls are very busy about the house ; they help their mothers to clean corn, carry water, gather wood, grind, bake and cook, and take care of the smaller children. They have not many games ; but the boys are fond of throwing with slings, and some can hurl a stone with such power as to give one a good idea of the use of the sling in ancient warfare. The slings are made of goat-hair, with a cap or bag in the middle to receive the stone, and are often used by shepherd lads when guarding their flocks to-day just as in the time of David. So skilful will a shepherd become in the use of his sling, that he has been seen to break the leg of a jackal slinking round the flock to seize a sheep.

In every country boys play with sticks and balls, and in Syria they cut curved sticks and make a ball of rags tightly bound together, and play a sort of hockey. For this game, of which they are very fond, they find



THE MOSQUE OF OMAR. Page 68.

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a level piece of ground, and make a hole in the centre. This hole is called the "mother," and one boy is set to guard it with his stick. The other boys try to drive the ball into the hole, and the one on guard strikes it away. It is a game at which boys will play for hours, and the traveller often sees a merry band outside a village leaping, and running, and striking, and shouting with all their might as the ball is nearly landed in the "mother," or is cleverly struck away.

Another favourite game, accompanied by the most tremendous noise, is the representation of an attack upon peaceful travellers by a band of Bedouin robbers. This is a very popular game, and the travellers, a band of boys, leading one or two donkeys they have fetched from the village pastures, are assailed by a yelling horde of their comrades, who swoop upon them from cover, after the style of Arab robbers, and a mimic battle is joined.

Then both boys and girls are very fond of playing at marriages and funerals. In the former game a little girl is chosen as bride and dressed up by her companions, and a marriage procession is formed, and they march through the village beating drums, playing pipes, singing, shouting, dancing, imitating at all points the joyous uproar of a real wedding. Or if a funeral is to be represented, then they utter heart-rending wails and shrieks, and beat their breasts, and pretend to tear their clothes. The well-known words in the New Testament must have been spoken from

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memory of such games as the children still play : "It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."

CHAPTER XIII

JERUSALEM

THE traveller of to-day enters Jerusalem by train. This may be more convenient than the 40-mile ride over rough hill roads from Jaffa, the nearest seaport, but he misses the striking sight which all used to enjoy—the first glimpse of a white line of towers, domes, and battlements, and the knowledge that it was the Holy City. In Palestine all roads lead to Jerusalem, and end at the gates which give entrance to the famous place.

To-day there are two cities : the old one within the walls, the city of the Bible and tradition, and the new one spreading across the open ground towards the west and north, a city of houses, shops, and hotels.

The old city stands on the ruins of many former cities. Twenty times has Jerusalem been destroyed and rebuilt. "The level of the streets rises through the centuries, till now the traveller walks on a pavement 30 or 40 feet above the floor of the ancient city. To discover the old foundations, the explorers of our time have sunk shafts which at some parts of the wall

Jerusalem

touch bottom 120 feet below the present surface. Far below the slighter masonry of the present wall lie the huge stones of early days. Some of these stones bear still the marks of Phœnician masons."

Through narrow and filthy lanes, the visitor passes upwards to the crown of the hill, where Solomon's Temple once stood in all its glory, and where now a beautiful mosque raises its dome over the sacred rock. There is hardly any spot on earth where so many memories may crowd upon the mind as the place where once rose the Temple.

"Here the Ark stood. Here great Solomon built his fane without sound of saw or hammer—that fane which was to be destroyed and re-arise, again to be destroyed and again arise. Here at last dawned the light of the predestined day when the Roman eagles were borne across it, and the hallowed temple of Jehovah went up in sheets of fire to heaven. Here the Veil was rent, and the Sanctuary desecrated, while the blood of its votaries ran ankle-deep into the vaults below. Men have worshipped here by millions. They have perished here by tens and twenties of thousands. The voice of Christ has echoed here. The shouts of the victors, the screams of the conquered, the moans of the dying, the solemn sounds of sacrifice, the blare of ceremonial trumpets, the daily whisper of a people's reverent prayer—it has heard them all in turn."

The Mosque of the Rock may be visited by Christians, but no Jew is allowed to set foot in it; the place

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where stood his Holy of Holies is utterly forbidden to him. The Christian who wishes to see the interior is met at the door by the Moslem guardians of the shrine, and he either takes off his boots, or his feet are wrapped about with coarse sackcloth. Then he is allowed to enter, and finds himself in a spacious building with windows of lovely old stained glass, with walls set with beautifully coloured tiles, and floors covered with rich carpets.

A lofty dome springs high above his head, and beneath the centre of the dome a sweep of rude living rock breaks through the floor, and is surrounded by low screens of iron and wood. Tradition declares that this is the rock whereon Abraham prepared to offer up Isaac as a living sacrifice, and here for many centuries stood the Jewish altar of sacrifice. Through the centre of the rock a hole is pierced, and it is believed that through this the blood of the victims drained away.

The Mosque of Omar, which contains the Mosque of the Dome, was converted from a Christian church by the Caliph Omar, and bears his name. The dome is a striking object in distant views of Jerusalem, and is of a beautiful colour, shining with a greenish lustre in the sun. Close to the Mosque of Omar there are vast underground vaults known by the name of Solomon's stables. Tradition declares that the horses of the great Jewish king once stood in this spot, and certainly in the East it is common to use underground caverns as a stable in summer, on account of the coolness.

Jerusalem

But whether Solomon's horses stood there or not, the Crusaders used them, and holes may be seen bored in the stone for them to run their halters through.

The Temple field is bounded on one side by the eastern wall, and below this wall lies the deep Valley of Jehosaphat, or Vale of Kidron, and beyond the valley rises the Mount of Olives. The Vale of Jehosaphat contains thousands upon thousands of tombs, where lie devout Jews brought hither for burial. A very ancient tradition declares this will be the scene of the Last Judgment, and firm believers in this tradition have wished their bones to lie in the valley.

Walking along the wall, we come to a gate which is built up. This is the famous Golden Gate, through which Christ rode into the city, while the multitude cried Hosanna, and flung palms before Him. A belief once spread among the Moslems that on a certain Moslem Sabbath, none knew when, a Messiah or great Christian leader would march in through this Golden Gate, and drive them out of the Sacred City for ever: so they built the gate up.

The splendid Church of the Holy Sepulchre is visited every year by many thousands of pilgrims, among whom Russians are by far the most numerous. It is said to be the scene of the Crucifixion, and to contain the tomb of Christ, and here is held every year the festival of the Easter fire.

This fire is supposed to be produced in a miraculous manner. A priest thrusts a lighted torch through a

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hole in the wall of the sepulchre, and the Greek Christians who fill the church struggle eagerly to light their tapers and lamps at this flame, which they hold to be sacred. There is a tremendous struggle to be among the first to catch the fire, and at times numbers have been killed in the crush, trodden underfoot by the maddened crowd.

An eyewitness speaks of the wonderful speed with which the flame is passed on, one lighting his taper at another's. No sooner is the torch passed through the hole than "now follows the really wonderful part. They all struggle to catch the first fire; they jump on each other's heads, shoulders, and backs; they hunt one another about the church with screams of joy; one passes it to the other; they rub it over their faces; they press it to their bosoms; they kiss it; they put it in their hair; they pass it through their clothes, and not one of this mad crowd is, or rather feels, himself burnt. It looked to me like spirits on tow; but it never expired, and every part of the basilica in one minute lit up with the blaze. . . . Only intense excitement accounts for the fire not burning them."

There is one part of the walls around the Temple area which is said still to stand just as Solomon built it. It is a stretch of wall, 50 or 60 feet high, constructed of immense stones, and for many centuries it has been known as the Place of Wailing of the Jews. Here, every Friday, Jews gather to weep for their lost glories, and to mourn over the fall of the stately Temple. Some

Jerusalem

press their faces against the wall and kiss the huge blocks, and repeat prayers, while tears stream down their faces ; others read from the Scriptures ; others, again, are gathered in a body, with a Rabbi, a Jewish teacher, for their leader. The Rabbi recites one line of a mournful lamentation, and the people make the response. Here are a few opening lines of a lamentation :

RABBI. On account of the palace which is laid waste.

PEOPLE. We sit solitary and weep.

RABBI. For the sake of the Temple which is destroyed.

PEOPLE. We sit solitary and weep.

RABBI. For the walls that are thrown down.

PEOPLE. We sit solitary and weep.

And so the lamentation goes on for an hour or more.

CHAPTER XIV

BETHLEHEM

THE scene of the Nativity of Christ is a most striking and picturesque little place. The traveller who approaches from the south "turns sharply into a valley, whose end is entirely blocked by a lofty hill, covered from end to end with shining white masonry set far up against the sky. It looks trim and newly finished, and one hardly knows whether to be delighted or vexed that Bethlehem should be so workmanlike a place."

The name "Bethlehem" means "House of Bread,"

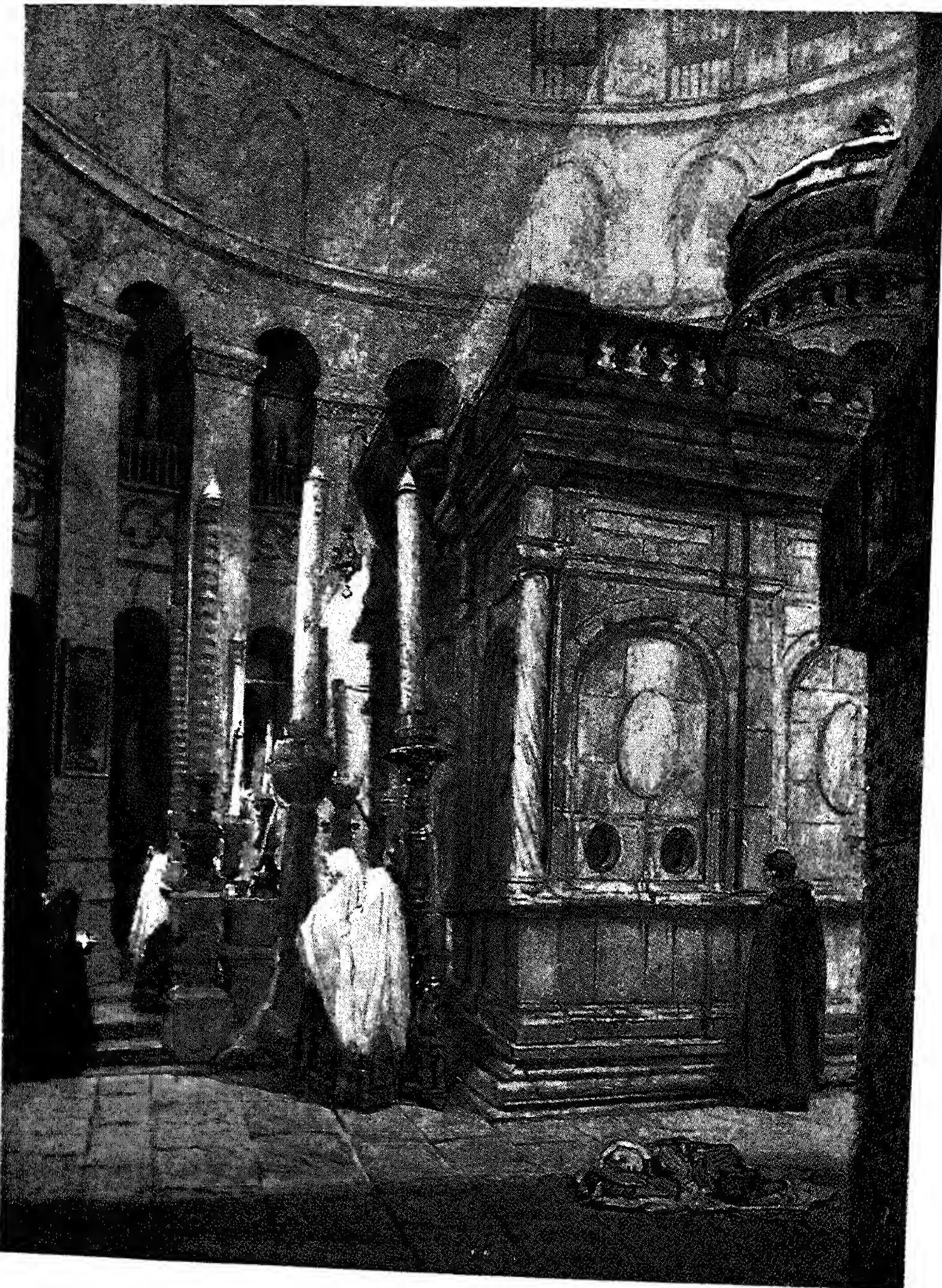
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and is significant of plenty and comfort. The pleasant name is fitly bestowed on a pleasant neighbourhood. The little town is approached over a sweet and fruitful country, the fields where Ruth gleaned after the reapers of Boaz. The mountains of Moab are blue in the distance, the land is fresh and smiling, and the traveller thinks, as he draws near the place where Christ was born, of the shepherd-boy David, who watched his father's flocks near by, and of the well by the gate, for the water of which the great King of Israel longed when enemies held his city.

On entering the place there is the usual disenchantment of the East. The town which looked so fair and white from the distance is a cluster of mean and dirty streets. And yet Bethlehem remains attractive far beyond the usual town of the Holy Land. Its people are a race quite apart from their neighbours.

The men are lively, energetic, and merry ; the women are famous for their beauty. The dress of the women is simple but striking. Over a long white inner garment they wear a second garment, of a pretty-coloured cloth. The outer garment is open in front as far as the waist, where it is kept in place by a girdle ; and these long robes, contrasting in colour, and draped about the tall, graceful figures of the women of Bethlehem, form a beautiful and picturesque dress.

But the most remarkable thing about a married woman of Bethlehem is her head-dress. It is considered improper to show the hair, so her head is covered with



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Bethlehem

a red cap, adorned with chains of silver and with coins. The chief coin is of gold, if the wearer can afford it, and is worth four or five pounds ; it is really a kind of medal made for the purpose. Around this medal hang rows of coins, until, in the case of a well-to-do woman, the forehead is entirely covered. Such a head-dress, with its rows of heavy coins, will often weigh several pounds, but the wearer becomes so accustomed to it that she feels nothing of it—nay, more, she is instantly distressed by its absence. If the huge ornament be laid aside, she at once begins to suffer from severe headache.

Now, this head-dress often represents the family wealth, and may be given in pledge as surety for a sum borrowed. In such a case the woman binds a heavy piece of iron or copper about the head, and so keeps off the threatened headache.

The spot where it is believed that Christ was born is covered by a great church, in which are several altars belonging to the different Christian sects which own the building. Below the church is a grotto in the rock, once, it is said, the stable of an inn. Here stands the Chapel of the Nativity, and a silver star in the floor marks the spot where Christ was born. Near at hand is a hollow in the rock, said to be the site of the manger in which He was laid.

It is a strange thing to see these holy places guarded by Moslem soldiers. Yet it is necessary ; for, unfortunately, the different sects of Christians do not ag-

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and often quarrel bitterly, so that the Turks are compelled to intervene and force them to keep the peace.

A great drawback in visiting these sacred spots is the crowd of beggars and sellers of souvenirs which haunts the neighbourhood of every famous place. At Bethlehem the visitor is begged to buy rosaries and other ornaments of mother-of-pearl, a material which the people work up very cleverly.

From the Church of the Nativity there is a pleasant walk to a high crest on the outskirts of the town, whence a wide prospect may be commanded. Far away stretches a broad plain, running to the Dead Sea and bounded by the Mountains of Moab. And at the spectator's feet lies an olive-garden, where tradition says that the shepherds were keeping watch by night when the angel visited them, and said: "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

CHAPTER XV

FROM NAZARETH TO GALILEE

AMID the stony hills of Galilee there lies a straggling village, spreading its houses over rounded slopes, which in spring are blue with iris and bright with cyclamen. This is Nazareth, the home of Jesus, and the object of pilgrimage for many thousand travellers of many nations every year. The wayfarer from Jerusalem toils over a rough road, and catches his first glimpse of the sacred

From Nazareth to Galilee

city from a rocky crest. The place lies in a dip of the ground, and its white houses run up the slopes on every side. No sooner does the traveller enter the town than here, as at Bethlehem, he is struck by the fine looks of the men, the beauty and grace of the women.

The pilgrim to Nazareth is shown many places which are declared to have been connected with the life of Christ. There is a cave which is said to have been the kitchen of the Virgin, a spot where the carpenter's shop of Joseph stood, a synagogue wherein Jesus taught. But it is doubtful whether any of these places are truly described, and the traveller must be content with what should amply content him—that this place was the home of Mary, and that here Jesus lived for thirty years, and looked upon a scene which cannot have altered greatly until this day.

As one writer remarks: "As a lad, perhaps like yonder child, the Saviour tended sheep and goats among these sterile rocks, to while away the time, plucking the cyclamen and iris, and watching the flocks of finches seek their food among the thistles. As a man, He may have worked those ancient plough-lands, taking His share of the simple labours of the family to which He belonged. In short, within this circle that the sight commands, for thirty years or more the Almighty dwelt on earth, acquiring in a humble incarnation one side of that wisdom which has changed the world. Here is the master fact that makes this perhaps the most holy ground in the entire universe, and, in its face, what

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does it matter which was the exact site of the Annunciation or of the shop of Joseph ?

“One spot there is, however, that He must often have visited as child and man, for there is no other water in Nazareth—the spring called Mary’s Well. This gushes out beneath an arch. Here in the morning and the evening come the women of Nazareth with their children to fetch the household supply of water in narrow-necked earthenware pitchers. Evidently this spring is the favourite gossiping-ground of the community ; for while the children play about outside or upon the roof of the arch, their mothers and sisters wash their feet in the overflow waters, and chatter away to each other of the news of the hour. So it would always have been. Hither day by day Mary must have come, bearing the empty pitcher balanced sideways upon her head and leading the infant Jesus by the hand. Here, too, in manhood, when weary with toil in the summer heat, Christ may often have sat at even, and, perhaps, have taught those who lingered round the fountain.”

As the traveller rides on from Nazareth towards the Sea of Galilee, a small mud-built hamlet is passed. It is Cana, the scene of the marriage-feast, where the water was turned into wine. Upon the traditional site of the miracle a church has been raised, and in its walls are built two large stone measures, capable of holding some 5 or 6 gallons apiece. These are shown as two of the actual vessels which Christ filled, but it cannot be

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said for certain that they are the same. They are very old, and have been shown for hundreds of years, and many pilgrims devoutly believe the story and kiss these sacred jars.

Beyond Cana the road passes a mountain called Karn Hattin, a lonely hill standing in a wide plain. It is said to be the Hill of the Beatitudes, where the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. In the plain below the hill, a great battle was fought in 1147 between the Crusaders and the mighty Emperor Saladin at the head of his Saracens. The contest was long and severe; but in the end the Christians were driven back upon the Mount, and there they perished in vast numbers. Thousands were slain by the sword of the victorious Saracens; thousands more perished from thirst and suffocation, for it was a burning July day, and the height of the scorching summer of Palestine.

Beyond the plain the traveller gains a ridge, whence he looks down on the Sea of Galilee far below—a vast blue lake, sparkling in the sunshine and hemmed about by a vast ring of green hills. The descent to the shores of the lake is by a breakneck path, and after a long scramble downwards, the city of Tiberias comes into sight.

Tiberias is a crowded town set on the shores of the lake, and inhabited mostly by Jews. Here may be seen the remains of the great Roman city, while on a hill above stood the palace of Herod. Ruins dot the shores of the lake in many directions. In the time of

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Christ the Sea of Galilee was busy with ships, and its shores were dotted with towns. But now the cities have gone, and places where houses were thickly clustered together are desolate wastes. The city of Capernaum, which was "exalted to heaven," has fallen, as Christ prophesied, and even its site is disputed, though many declare it lay on a plain beside the lake where now a few ruins may be found.

The Sea of Galilee is a famous place in the story of Christ's ministry. He was walking beside its waters when He called the first Apostles to Him to become fishers of men. He walked upon its waters in the storm which almost overwhelmed His followers, and many of His miracles were performed in the towns about it.

There are still fishermen who ply their trade along the shores of the lake, and sometimes each man works by himself with his own net. At other times several men go out with boats and work with large nets, just as Simon Peter and his friends were working when they took the miraculous draught of fishes.

It is very interesting to watch the fisherman who works by himself, and it may easily be done, for he fishes from the shore. He has a circular net of fine twine, small in the mesh, and weighted with pieces of lead round the edge of the net. To the centre of the net a long cord is fastened. The fisherman holds the net over his left arm, and wades waist-deep into the water as the waves roll on to the beach.

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Soon he marks a shoal of fish swimming about. Stooping down, so that he may not be seen, he creeps towards them, or waits till they swim towards him. Then, with a swift, dexterous cast, he flings the circular net over them. The leaden weights sink swiftly, and draw the net down over the fish. The fisherman pulls the rope, and the leaden weights are drawn together, shutting the fish into the bag of the net.

From Tiberias visitors often row or sail across the lake to the spot where the River Jordan flows into the lake, some 8 or 9 miles from the town. The boatmen will only venture in fine weather, for when a squall rushes down from the hills, a violent and dangerous sea springs up very quickly. It was in such a squall that the disciples were in danger of sinking, when they were saved by Him who could still the raging sea. The Jordan runs into the Sea of Galilee with a strong flood, bringing down earth and mud from its upper valley, and, upon a contrary wind, its current raises large backward-curling waves. But this world-famous river must have a chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SACRED RIVER

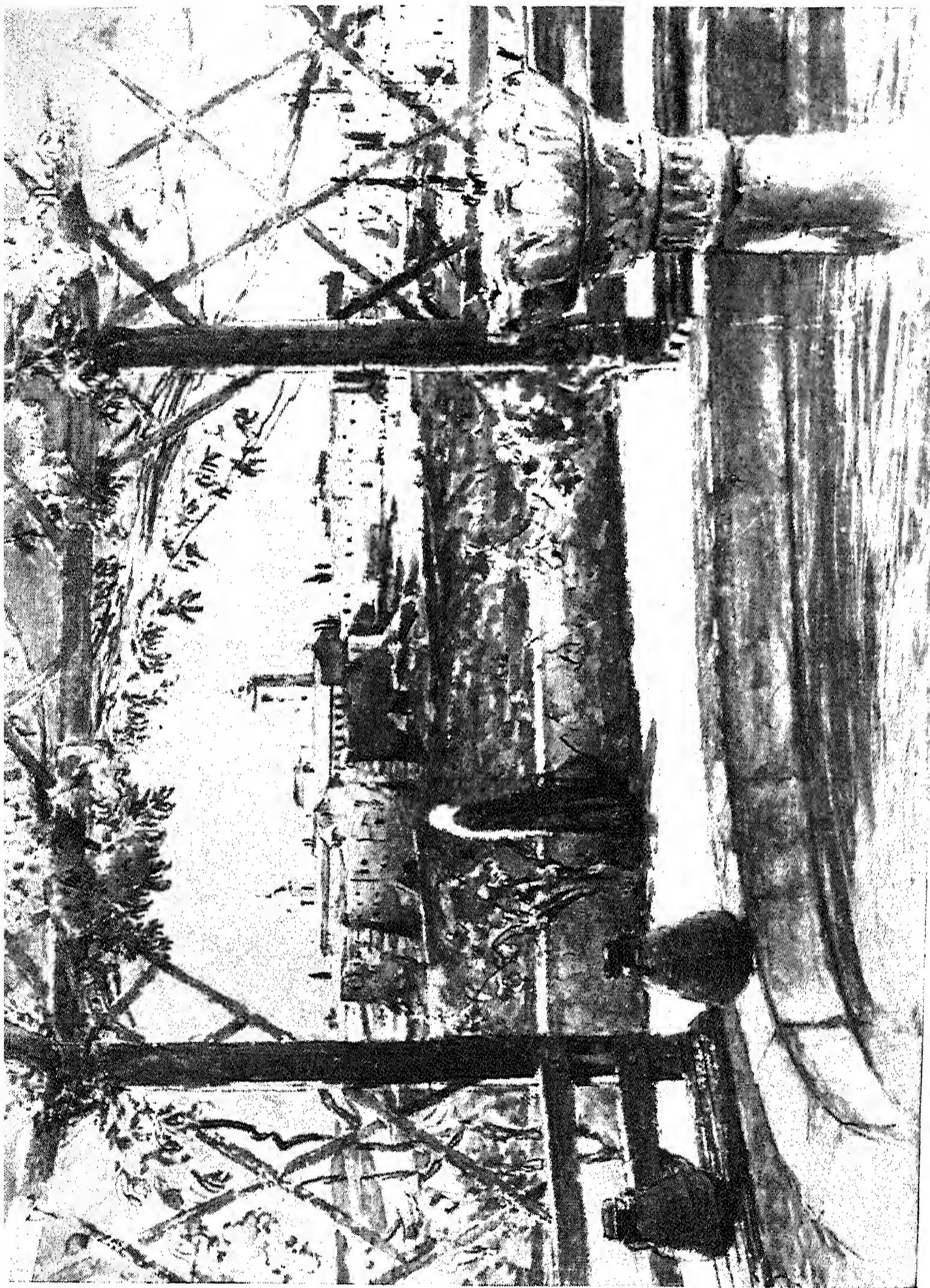
THE famous river of Jordan does not begin as a tiny trickling streamlet; it springs strong and full-bodied from the roots of the great mountain Hermon, the true

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centre of the water-supply of Palestine. Hermon holds snow all the year round, and from its noble crest sends down thirty streams, flowing in all directions. But its greatest work is the Jordan. Yet from Jordan and its companions not a single drop of water gains the ocean. Every river flows into desert or morass or inland sea, and its waters are taken up in evaporation by the burning sun. The Jordan itself pours a full and powerful tide into the Dead Sea, but from that gloomy lake no stream runs out.

The most striking of the three sources of the Jordan is that of Banias, which leaps out at the foot of Hermon, where many fountains burst from the stones and earth, and form a pool green with reeds and water-plants. Banias is one of the three springs of Palestine which, according to Jewish tradition, "remained not closed up after the Flood." Another source is 2 miles away, at a place called Tell-el-Kadi. Here there are ruins of an ancient city screened by bushes and thickets, from whose green shade the river leaps out, spreads into a pool, and then streams away south as a foaming torrent. Within a stretch of some 7 miles the various branches join, and the water flows on, to lose itself in an immense forest of papyrus-canæs. Below this vast thicket the river gathers in a little lake, whence it flows, a slow, clear stream, down to Lake Huleh. Ten miles below Huleh it enters the Sea of Galilee, having rushed madly along a narrow defile.

From the Sea of Galilee the Jordan pours a broad



LOOKING OUT ON THE CHURCH OF THE
NATIVITY AT BETHLEHEM. Page 74.

The Sacred River

and stately flood to the south, and begins its many windings, falling lower and lower through vast gorges until it gains the Dead Sea. Its final course is through a valley, which is simply a deep trench in the earth, its bottom far below sea-level. In this trench the heat is terrific, and all is bare soil and burned, naked rocks, save where Jordan flows and nourishes a rich vegetation upon its banks. A strip of living green, of groves of willows and poplars and tall reeds, runs along the valley, and forms a striking scene when seen from the heights above. These groves and rich growths of reeds and bushes thicken as the Dead Sea is neared, and a few miles above the sea is the luxuriant verdure of the "Swellings," or the "Pride" of Jordan. Here pilgrims bathe in the sacred waters, and cut staves from the trees upon the bank as mementoes of their journey.

These pilgrims are mostly Russians, and the traveller in the Holy Land is constantly meeting with bands of Russian pilgrims tramping along on foot to visit the sacred places and bathe in Jordan. They belong to the peasant class, *moujiks*, in blouses and caps, and long boots reaching to the knee, and women, as a rule elderly, with weather-beaten faces and kerchiefs tied over their heads. They have very little money and very little luggage, a few cooking-pots, and a small bundle of baggage slung over the shoulders. Many of them have marched on foot, a six months' journey from the heart of the great land to which they belong. They

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are very simple, very ignorant. They believe every story they hear, and their enthusiasm is touching to behold. They march round the walls of Jerusalem, chanting triumphal psalms, and fling themselves eagerly into the sacred waters of the Jordan. They bear their winding-sheets with them, and dip these also in the river. Nay, more: they often carry the winding-sheet of some friend who has been unable to make the journey, but cherishes the hope that he may be buried in a dress once dipped in the holy stream. They are as happy and merry as a band of children, and greet all whom they meet with bows and gentle salutations; they are pious, simple, and kindly folk, these Russian pilgrims.

Below the "Swellings" the Jordan makes its last swift rush as a river, and leaps into the bosom of the Dead Sea, where it is lost.

This strange and wonderful sea is one of the marvels of the earth. It lies far below sea-level, and is, in places, of great depth. It receives every day millions of tons of water, yet not a drop flows out. Nor does the sea gain in depth, for it loses by evaporation all the water it receives. It lies amid a land of death, of bare burned slopes, on which no tree or shrub ever grows, and over which birds fly swiftly without breaking their flight. The soil is nitrous and the springs are sulphurous. The earth is littered with lumps of pure sulphur and blocks of bitumen. The water is intensely salt—many times saltier than the sea—and the shores are

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white with salt which the drying water has left on the sand.

The water of the Dead Sea is very buoyant, and those who enter it should be good swimmers ; not because they will sink, but because it is difficult to keep the head in its proper position. A non-swimmer would remain on the surface, but there is a tendency for the legs to be thrown up and the head down, so that once he overbalanced, he would drown with half his body out of water. “To swim you must lie on your back, or tread the water standing upright. If a drop happens to get into your eye, nose, or mouth it is agonizing—so salt, hard, and bitter.” This hard, salt water clings to the skin of the swimmer after he leaves the Dead Sea : he must rush to the Jordan, and dip himself there to wash the salt water away. If he does not do so, it is very likely that his clothes will stick to his skin.